

**ONE  
OF THE**



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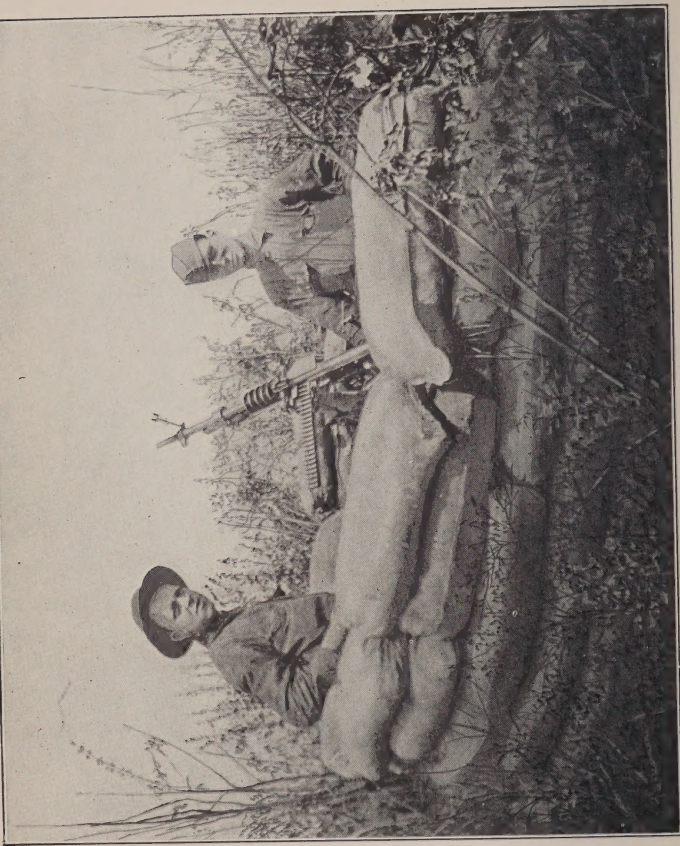


**ONE OF THE Y.D.**









CORPORAL GORDON E. DENTON

*Killed in action, Oct. 30, 1918*

CORPORAL SLATER WASHBURN

C BATTERY MACHINE-GUN EMPLACEMENT,  
ST.-JULIEN FRONT, TOUL SECTOR

ONE OF THE

**Y**

[YANKEE DIVISION]

*By* SLATER WASHBURN

CORPORAL C BATTERY, 101ST  
FIELD ARTILLERY, TWENTY-SIXTH  
DIVISION, A.E.F.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
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## TO

The boys of C Battery, 101st Field Artillery, Twenty-sixth Division, who fought and died for the great cause, and who now lie buried beneath the soil of France, far from home, yet near in spirit to those whose privilege it was to serve with them.



## PREFACE

*IN writing this little book I have sought to portray the everyday life of a soldier who served in France, treating the subject from the point of view of an enlisted man, one of the many thousands who served in the ranks. It has been my purpose to describe the experiences of the boys in Battery C, 101st Field Artillery from April, 1917, to August, 1918, typical of the experiences of so many young men who answered the "call," and served their country in the World War.*

*I am especially grateful to Miss Margaret Denholm for her coöperation and assistance in the preparation of the manuscript.*

SLATER WASHBURN

*Worcester*

*March 1919*





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# ONE OF THE Y. D.

## CHAPTER I

### BOXFORD TO FRANCE

THERE was a certain electric thrill in the air. Something out of the ordinary was about to break; even the "skipper" seemed a bit excited; so when the orders came down to "pack up" we knew it would n't be long before we were on our way to France.

Since April 9, 1917, the members of C Battery, 101 F.A., 26th Division, had been on pins and needles waiting for those orders, and at last the day after Labor Day of the same year they had come.

For weeks (for months it had seemed to us) we had been doing "squads east and west," guard duty, and the many things which make camp life the same the world over. We had simulated fire on our three-inch guns so many times that the mere sight of the flag-pole, which had afforded such a convenient aiming-

point, filled one with intense disgust. We had been inspected and inspected till we began to answer the customary questions in our sleep. In short, since the 25th of July when we were called out, we had been "playing soldier" according to the most approved methods, and we were heartily anxious to move, because we all knew that our next move would be across. And so, when the captain called all the "non-coms" into the first sergeant's tent and told us to "pack up and hush it up," we went to it with a vengeance.

On Thursday, September 7, 1917, at exactly 12 noon, every tent in the entire regiment was "struck," and with our packs on our backs and a bit of a jump in our hearts, we marched to the station, with the band playing "There's a long, long trail a-winding." It was short work to entrain, and with a final blast of the whistle we *were off*. Not a word of our departure had got out, and we slipped away quietly without any hand-clapping or cheers. Just business!

As the train made its roundabout way toward New York, the talk and laughter of the

boys ceased, and most of them took a long, last look at the familiar landmarks of Massachusetts, breathing a silent prayer for those loved ones whom they were leaving behind, in most cases without a word of good-bye.

It was an all-night trip in the coaches to New York, and the majority of the boys were glad to snatch a few hours' sleep. No sooner had I got fairly comfortably settled, with my head resting on the feet of my opposite neighbor, than I was rudely awakened and told to "shake it up," as we had arrived. "Shake it up" I did, and found that we had indeed stopped, and at once we began to transfer our barrack bags and equipment to the small steamer which was to ferry us up the river. Dawn was just breaking as we wound our way to the dock where the transport lay, gray and grim in the early morning light with its guns ready for business.

We lined up in the huge shed, received cards indicating the numbers of our "staterooms," and, taking a farewell look at real American ground, stepped aboard.



On shipboard, at last! It was a great feeling, and we all looked forward to a comfortable trip across, as our ship was the Adriatic, an English boat, made over into a transport.

As we wound our way in single file, following closely in the footsteps of our guide, a stalwart English seaman, our minds naturally turned to a mental picture of our quarters. We were glad that we were to have staterooms and keenly anticipated the comforts of a lower berth. We must have penetrated far below the third deck, when a sergeant in front of me, quietly tapping our guide on the shoulder, remarked, "Say, Jack, let's get our stuff into our staterooms first, before we begin this tour of the ship; it's very interesting, but this barrack bag is heavy." He had voiced our sentiments to a nicety and we all eagerly awaited the reply, which was soon forthcoming to the effect that we were on our way to our quarters.

Never having been on shipboard before, but having somewhere acquired the impression that staterooms, as a usual thing, were not below the fourth deck, I was surprised and

interested. Down, down, even farther down we went, until it reminded me of the time I scorned the elevator in the Washington Monument, preferring to walk. At last we stopped, and with our sudden halt the truth burst upon us. Gone were the visions of comfortable state-rooms; our dream was rudely shattered. We were in the steerage. There could be no doubt of that. The narrow iron bunks, tier upon tier, proclaimed the fact to a certainty. One optimistic soul inquired of our guide if there was anything below us, and received the cheering news, "Nothing but several tons of high-explosive." That was a comfort, at any rate, to know that we were not actually at the bottom of the ship.

We made ourselves comfortable, however, and after crawling over three other boys, I reached my "roll," and was ready for the trip.

We hoped for immediate departure, but delay was caused by the fact that we had more cargo to take on. The following morning, bright and early, our tug came alongside, and soon we were moving slowly down the river.

No man was allowed above decks — except, of course, the officers — and we eagerly sought a portion of a porthole, to get a farewell glimpse of “God’s Country.”

As we passed the Statue of Liberty and realized that we were really on our way, a thrill shot up and down my back, and the next minute my eyes dimmed a bit as I realized that of all those boys (almost the first American soldiers to sail for France) who had so willingly offered themselves to their country, many would never again gaze upon that statue, so dear to the hearts of all Americans, which was swiftly fading away on the port side.

After noon mess we were allowed on deck, the pilot having left us sometime since, and the ship was making rapid headway under its own power. The shore grew less distinct, finally melted into the distance, and we were alone, as far as the eye could reach, headed up the coast for our first stop, Halifax.

The journey to Halifax proved uneventful, and the morning of the following day we steamed into the harbor amidst the cheers of

the blue-jackets on the English cruisers which lined the channel. We spent the day at life-boat drills, impatient at the delay and anxious to be off again. The following afternoon found us again at sea, and after a day or two we settled into the regular routine of life on ship-board.

On looking back, the trip really was most comfortable. We had our meals served in the third-class dining-room, which was also used for a smoking-room. There was plenty of deck-room for exercise, and good weather most of the way. The only formation of the day was set for nine o'clock every morning, and we spent that hour going through exercises on deck or playing games, in order to keep in fit condition.

Our one real excitement of the trip occurred after we had been out about eight days. I happened to be one of the corporals of the regimental guard, and had just posted my relief about midnight, when, suddenly, all lights on the ship went on. In two minutes they were turned off again, but inasmuch as we were in

the danger zone, and a lighted ship could be seen for miles, you can imagine the sensations of the men on deck who saw this phenomenon occur. The officer of the guard went over the ship carefully, but no soldier on post had seen any one near the switches. It was a mystery. But when the same thing happened on four successive nights, always in the dead of night, it was clear that there was "dirty" work afoot. And so it proved, because on the fifth night, the man was caught red-handed, having made the connection by two hidden wires and thus causing the circuit. Rumor had it that he was an Austrian, and after we reached England, he was reported as having received his well-merited reward, a blank wall and a firing squad.

We landed at Liverpool after sixteen days on shipboard, and everybody was glad to be on "terra firma" again. We entrained in third-class coaches and pulled out of the Liverpool station at noon, bound for Southampton. It was a beautiful trip, the green fields and rolling hills forming a most welcome contrast to the monotonous expanse of ocean. Southampton,

where we spent the night, gave us our first real touch of war. The streets were dark, no lights showing because of air raids. We marched through the silent town with here and there a face visible at some window crack, wondering, no doubt, who we were, very few of the inhabitants realizing until the following day that we were Americans.

We spent the night in a rest camp some three miles outside of the town, and the following afternoon we again boarded a ship, but this time a Channel steamer. It was a very small boat, and we had standing-room — that was all. A great target for a submarine. The men were crowded so closely together below decks that it was impossible even to sit down. When darkness settled, we crept out from the dock, and after picking up our escort of “chasers” zigzagged our way across to Havre, where we landed the following morning. I had managed to catch two hours’ sleep, reposing on the deck beneath the smokestack, when, awakened by a sudden turning of the ship, I asked one of the boys, who was standing at the



rail, whether anything interesting had happened during the night. "No, nothing much," was the answer; "a torpedo just missed us by twenty-five yards." Realizing that there might be more of them, and anxious to be there to see the fun, I joined my friend at the rail. No more excitement, however, and we docked at Havre, shouldered our packs, and stepped ashore. At last we were in France.

It was a wonderful feeling to see the enthusiasm of the French when they realized that we were Americans. They were glad to see us, — there was no question about it, — and we were equally glad to see them. There, for the first time, we saw a large base hospital with a steady stream of ambulances busy, bringing in the wounded. We heard rumors of a "big drive," and the number of wounded coming in seemed to corroborate this. As those wounded were carried by, you could see our boys straighten up, for they saw for the first time what war meant and they were more anxious than ever to get into it, to get to the front and to fight, as those boys had fought who were



passing by on their way to the hospital, with a smile on their tired faces.

The order came down to "fall in" and off we went, packs on back, to another camp where we spent the day. I was assigned to an unloading detail, and so remained behind at the dock. While standing there waiting for orders, I saw my first "Boches." There they were, lots of them, German prisoners, working on the roads. It was a most welcome sight, and how they looked at us! They would not believe we were Americans, but thought us English in disguise, as they put it. They could not imagine that America was in the war. It did not take them long, however, to accept this last report as a reality. After all the baggage had been unloaded, I rejoined my battery at the rest camp, where I found most of the boys, stretched out on the floor of the tents, snatching a few hours' sleep.

For the benefit of those who have not had a personal acquaintance with a rest camp, I will say that the expression "rest camp" does not, as its name implies, mean a camp for rest —

far from it. The title was no doubt chosen with a view to inspiring in the hearts of the unknown a hope of repose. We had no sooner arrived, however, and laid aside our packs temporarily, than orders came down to hurry "mess" and be ready to leave as soon as possible. All of which was done, and late afternoon found us again on our way, this time bound for the station, where we entrained and started on a journey to an unknown destination. Here it was that we made our first acquaintance with the "French Pullmans," and their well-known signs, "Hommes 40, Chevaux 8." They consisted of rather small box-cars with wooden benches placed inconveniently within, so that one could neither lie on the floor nor sit in any but the most uncomfortable positions.

Before leaving the station, some Australians, who had been back on a brief furlough and were returning to the front, came up to the cars and soon they were exchanging cigarettes and stories with our boys. They were fine examples of the highest type of soldier, fearless, good-natured, and with a certain dash

which at once won the admiration and affection of their American brothers. They told us bits of "front-line" news and wished us "good luck" as we pulled out.

That night was one of the worst I ever spent in France. We had a car crowded to the full capacity, with scarcely room for the men to sit down, to say nothing of lying down. In fact, even to sit one had to be a contortionist of no mean ability. Finally, after much shifting of my position, I secured the least uncomfortable arrangement, and with my head and back on a bench and my legs on the floor was about to seek "soothing slumber" when I discovered that our car had a square wheel which made a most disconcerting noise. I began counting each revolution, reached somewhere about the sixteen hundred mark, when I fell into a semi-comatose state from which I was several times awakened by the too close proximity of some of my neighbors' feet. Thus passed the night.

Sunrise found us all awake and eagerly catching our first glimpse of "France from

a box-car." We passed through much beautiful country — picturesque villages with their quaint houses, and large cities with their beautiful cathedrals. These, and especially the costumes of the people, were so interesting that the day passed quickly, and we were thinking once more of the night to come. We had decided that the benches must be taken up, piled in one corner, and the floor space utilized: which, after much difficulty, was accomplished. We stretched out, and were peacefully falling asleep when the train stopped, and we were ordered out. Out we jumped, and "fell in" with no idea of where we were or what was going to happen. After the usual delay the command "Rest" came down, and without even removing their packs the boys simply sank down on the ground, pillowed their heads on the soft side of a rail, and were "dead to the world," in less time than it takes to tell it. I never realized before how very comfortable a rail could be when used as a pillow, but it is all in the point of view. Soon we were again awakened, marched away from the tracks,

loaded into some trucks driven by French soldiers, and after ten or fifteen minutes, unloaded and marched away into the night. Some cheerful soul made the statement that he had overheard one of the officers say that we had only ten miles more to "hike" that night. Our optimistic friend, at precisely that moment, stubbed his toe and pitched headlong into a deep ditch, much to our delight. On and on we went, and as the distance increased so did the weight of our blanket rolls. Some one whispered in my ear, "Just think of all those good porters doing nothing down at the South Station." It was an awful thought. Soon we began to swear that the next step would be our last, and to curse inwardly the officers who marched steadily on, oblivious to the fact that they were carrying no equipment and we were. Suddenly came the order "Halt," and we did so gladly, only to move forward the next minute. A building loomed out of the darkness; we were led in. Our barracks! Concrete, with a very damp floor; but without even taking the time to undo our rolls we sank down and at

once were asleep. As I drifted slowly into luxurious slumber, never, in the softest of feather beds, have I been one half as deliciously comfortable as I was on the damp concrete floor, with my mess-kit for a pillow.



## CHAPTER II

### TRAINING AT CAMP COETQUIDAN

CAMP COETQUIDAN, where we found ourselves, was a typical French camp. It had been used by Napoleon as a place for the mobilization of his Second Army and had many interesting traditions. Many of the streets were named for French officers who had fallen in battle and the place was filled with French soldiers and German prisoners. We were the first Americans to set foot in that neighborhood and were at once the center of interest. Those who were fortunate enough to speak French made speedy friends with the French *poilus*, who did all in their power to make us feel at home.

The surrounding country was beautiful. Long, rolling hills stretching far into the distance with here and there the tiny spire of some church marking the center of a small town. There were two towns near the camp, both picturesque from a distance, but upon nearer acquaintance found to be very dirty,

and the inhabitants exceedingly poor. But even from the poorest the hospitality and good-cheer which were extended to our boys won their everlasting affection.

The German prisoners, for the most part, had been confined here since the beginning of the war. They were comfortably quartered in wooden barracks and seemed well fed and contented with life. They would not, at first, believe us Americans, but considered us, as had those at Havre, English in disguise.

Our quarters were in stone barracks. We slept on iron cots, and on the whole were very comfortable. In looking back at these luxuries when at the front, some one would remark, lying upon the floor of a leaky dug-out, "The Battle of Coetquidan was a tough one." We were well off, and we knew it. One day of rest, after our journey, and we started in upon our course of intensive training. Until the material (guns, caissons, and limbers) arrived, we spent most of the time taking long "hikes" into the surrounding country in order to toughen the men and get them into condition as rapidly as

possible. The first Sunday in camp was a "red-letter" day in my life. After much "parlez-vous"-ing, I succeeded in getting a French corporal for an hour's instruction on a French "75." It was the first time I had seen the famous gun, and inasmuch as we knew that we were to use the French guns, I was particularly anxious to learn the differences between the "75" and our American three-inch which latter we had used in the States. It was wonderful to hear this old French soldier, who had been at the front for three years, explain in simple French the wonders of the gun that had saved France. Before I knew it, the afternoon had passed.

Within a comparatively short time our guns came, and under French instruction we started our preliminary training. Our officers, as well as the men, had to learn the field artillery game as the French played it, from the very beginning. It was hard work for all concerned, and when night came we were all more than glad to seek a good meal in the small town of Saint-Malo, our bunks, and sleep.

Five or six of us used to patronize a certain café. We were the first Americans whom they had ever seen and consequently we always had the best. We ordered huge omelets of from thirty-six to fifty-four eggs regularly, but it was not long before we tired of omelets, and so one night I suggested good old American scrambled eggs. The vote was unanimous, so I arose and sought the madame. It took me four successive evenings of explaining, in French, before we attained the desired result, but finally we were successful, and from that night on, our café was famous as having "les œufs américains." To my surprise, the French do not eat toast. It took me a long time to teach the good old lady how to make this delicacy, but we were again successful, and our suppers at this place were oases in the desert of long hours and hard work.

Although the work was hard, it was interesting, and we made such rapid progress that after two weeks of simulated fire, the officers decided to take us on the range for actual firing. I will never forget the excitement of that

early start for real fire. It was a cold, wet morning, and we were well on our way at dawn. The guns had been put into position the night before by the French, as we had no horses of our own as yet, so all was in readiness when we arrived. The first four gun sections took charge of their respective guns, cleaned them with great care, and received the final instructions from the battery commander. There was some delay caused by the fog which made observation difficult, but as the sun broke through the cloud, the command "Load" was given, and we stood clear for the first shot. "Fire," and C Battery spoke for the first time in its official capacity. After the first shot, all nervousness vanished, and before noon the men were performing like veterans.

For weeks we had been eagerly expecting our horses, and at last they arrived. Never in all my life have I seen such confusion. Of course those who were entitled to single mounts were anxious to get their pick before the best ones had been taken. The officers come first, and then the "Non-Coms" in order of rank. I shall

never forget one sergeant, who was anxious for a horse with "pep." He had been making the stable sergeant's life miserable for the previous two weeks. Finally, when his turn came we all lined up to watch him make his selection. It had been raining all the night before and the ground was covered with some three or four inches of nice, soft, slimy mud. After choosing a high-spirited animal, he led it out and sprang into the saddle, paused there a moment, and after executing a complete somersault (one of the neatest I ever saw), measured his six feet in the mud. It took three of us to help him extricate himself from the clutches of mother earth. His only request was that he be given any horse at all, provided that it was a gentle beast, and preferably blind. Many were the boys who, a few short weeks before, had boasted of their equestrian powers, but now met with a similar Waterloo.

Thanksgiving was drawing near and great was the interest among the men as to whether or not they would have real turkey. The supply companies were working day and night.





### THE COOKS

*Left to right : Loris J. Smith, Joseph T. Hodgkins, Sergeant John H. MacCorison,  
Lester M. Foss, Nelson G. Pickett*



Great truck-loads of provisions were coming in daily, and when, the day before Thanksgiving, our battery received four more turkeys than their allowance called for (thanks to our mess sergeant, who was an "old-timer" at that great army game "catch as catch can"), joy reigned supreme. The cooks were busy for twenty-four hours preparing the dinner. And so on the afternoon of Thanksgiving Day we trooped into the mess shack with our mess-kits "stripped for action," to find a feast awaiting us which was worthy of the highest traditions of good old New England. We had mashed potatoes, with real gravy, turkey and all you could eat of it, celery, peas — in short, everything that our minds had been picturing for the previous two weeks as essential to a Thanksgiving dinner. But when real apple, squash, and mince pies were brought on, followed by candy and cigars from S. S. Pierce's, Boston, imagine it! There was n't a man in that mess shack who would n't have cheerfully yielded up his life (after the dinner, of course) for those cooks.

As time passed, the 102d and 103d Regiments of our brigade arrived from the States, and were immediately set to work. As the Americans moved in, the French began to move out, and it was not long before the camp was almost entirely American, save for the German prisoners. There was a certain division which was reported as having sailed before us, but when they arrived a good month after the Yankee boys, there was much good-natured joking at their expense.

Training, at best, is very tiresome, and it was not long before we were thoroughly anxious to be on the move again, especially as we knew that the next move would be "the front."

Christmas came with its many letters and packages from home. Much delicious fruit-cake and cigarettes, and last, but by no means least, a real Christmas dinner. The weather was cold, but no snow had fallen and our regular routine of training continued unbroken, save by the rumors of a move which continued to float down to us from time to time.

Early in January, we prepared for an inspection by our brigade commander, General William L. Lassiter, a splendid soldier and very popular with the men. For days horses were groomed, material cleaned, barracks swept. We were given to understand that upon this inspection depended our fate: whether we would leave, or continue our training. We passed with flying colors, and soon the orders came down to turn in all surplus equipment and get ready for a quick move. Rumor had it that we were to join our infantry at Neuf Château where we were to train with them for a short time and then go up to the line.

On Thursday, the 31st of January, 1918, the long-expected orders came. Everything had been in readiness for days, so it was a simple matter to pack up, and by night everything was prepared. That day we went through the gas chamber in order to test both our French and English masks, which we found in excellent condition.

The next morning at exactly eleven-thirty, we "hitched in," made our blanket rolls secure

on the carriages, and pulled out of park. We reached the entraining point at about two-thirty, but it was not until four that our battery began to entrain. It took us something over two hours, and shortly after dark we pulled out of the station, bound for — no one knew where.



## CHAPTER III

### MOVING TO THE FRONT

To entrain a battery is no small task. In the first place, an officer and several men are sent ahead of the battery and their duty is to mark each car with chalk indicating for what it is to be used. The horse-cars have an allotment of eight horses, and the cars in which the men travel, hold anywhere from thirty to forty, depending upon their size. Then there are the flatcars for the guns, limbers, and caissons, the two park wagons, fourgon wagon, forge and store wagons, ration-cart, water-wagon, and last, but most important of all, the "soup gun" (or movable kitchen). The greatest difficulty comes in loading the horses. To induce, by fair means or foul, a horse to enter one of those cars requires much patience and practice. There was one particular horse that caused no end of trouble. He simply would not go in. Finally the captain, doubtless disgusted with the efforts of the men, seized the bridle with

a determined hand, but all to no avail. A horse is the one thing in the army that treats officers and men alike. And the captain did not impress this one in the slightest. He would not move. Then it was that a wise old sergeant suggested a method of attack. Two men, each holding the ends of a rope, standing on each side of the horse maneuvered the rope so that it surrounded the animal's quarters, then with a sudden pull, they deftly slid our troublesome friend into the car in a "sitting-down" position; humiliating, no doubt, for the horse, but a very effective method.

I was not attached to any section and so traveled in the forage car with the stable sergeant and one of the lieutenants. It was a good-sized box-car, filled with hay and grain. We rolled the bales of hay together making three bunks. It was one of the most comfortable nights I ever spent. We had rations for three days, and expected to enjoy our trip thoroughly. The next morning found us passing through thickly settled towns and villages. The French people were most enthusiastic in

their welcome wherever the train stopped. From all that we could gather we were traveling towards Neuf Château, which we knew to be a good three days' trip on the train. So, late on the afternoon of the second day we invited a few of our friends to join us in our "private car," and prepared ourselves for another comfortable night's sleep. It must have been about midnight when the train stopped suddenly, and one of the officers passed the word to us to be ready to detrain in half an hour. We had all opened our blanket rolls, anticipating a long trip, and great was the confusion as we sought to re-make them in total darkness with the car lurching from side to side. Suddenly the train stopped short, and the captain sent for me informing me that I was to go ahead with three men and a French officer as "markers" for the rest of the battery when they came along. In other words, we were to direct the battery, placing men at intervals along the route. At that moment the French officer came up, motioned to us to follow him, and we started hurrying along to keep up. I had visions

of "hiking" three or four miles at this terrific pace, when we rounded the corner of the station, and there, standing in total darkness, was a real limousine. It was my first ride in a limousine since I had been in France, and although it was comparatively short, it was one of keen delight for all of us. The most interesting question was, "Where are we?" Nobody had the remotest idea. We went up a hill, into a town, and stopped near a large cathedral. Out we stepped and waited for directions. After a careful explanation from the French officer, I learned that we were to billet for the night in the cathedral. I posted one man at a short distance from the cathedral where the battery was to "park" for the night, and a boy named Wogan and I remained at the cross-roads to show the men their billets when they arrived. It must have been about two o'clock in the morning, for I remember looking at my watch as we stood there. The stars were twinkling brightly overhead and a slight breeze just stirred the leaves of the trees. We exchanged a few words and lapsed into silence, appreci-

ating the beauty of the night. It seemed like a late September night in New England, and the quiet town suggested some peaceful little New England village. We must have remained silent for half an hour, when suddenly, as my eyes were gazing into the distance, I saw a ball of fire shoot into the sky, burst, and slowly descend. A star shell, followed almost immediately by a dull, "boom boom." Then silence. Like a flash we turned to each other. "Rod, we're near the front," were my first words. It was the first intimation we had of it, and my heart gave a leap as I realized that it would not be long before our guns would be flashing from those not far distant hills.

In another hour we began to hear the battery as it pulled up the long hill. Soon it entered the town, went into park, and the horses were unhitched, watered, and fed. By the time the men reached the billets it was 5 A.M. and we all turned in for an hour's sleep.

Reveille at six o'clock and we eagerly sought the "soup gun" for hot coffee and bread. Then it was that we found we were in the historic

town of Soissons, which had been held by the Germans a little over a year before. There was German writing on some of the buildings, most of it written as the Boches were retreating in the late fall of 1916. The cathedral was most picturesque. It had been standing for several hundred years. One Frenchman told me it dated back to 1336. The upper part was badly damaged, I thought at the time, by bombs from hostile aircraft, but have since learned that most of the damage had been sustained in the Franco-Prussian War.

Eight o'clock found us again on our way, headed in the direction of the front, and every man in the battery was in high spirits.

We had barely reached the outskirts of Soissons when the Frenchmen along the way began pointing into the air in a great state of excitement. I glanced up, but all that was visible to me was puffs of white smoke from the anti-aircraft guns silhouetted against the blue sky. One of the poilus standing near, replied to my question that it was an "avion Boche." I could see nothing, but finally with the aid of



field-glasses made out a black spot, high in the heavens, and, as it turned and twisted, suddenly catching a reflection of the sun on its wings, I made out the iron cross painted on the wings, denoting an enemy airplane. We later discovered that it was a common occurrence for German planes to come over Soissons and that air raids at night had long since lost their novelty for the inhabitants. This was the only excitement of the trip, and we pursued our way along the road which was marked by the very heavy fighting of the previous year. Trenches lined both sides of the road, barbed wire was much in evidence, and here and there old discarded equipment could be seen, thrown aside by the Germans in their retreat. We passed through two small villages used as billets for French troops who were back on a few days' relief from "the line." They cheered us as we went through, glad to see that America was so soon to take active part.

At noon we reached a large wood, where our "horse-line" was to be established, and the men were glad to "turn in," although it was

afternoon. The term "horse-line" or "échelon," as the French call it, means, as its name implies, the place, a few miles behind the actual front, where the horses are kept. It is really headquarters for the battery. Only those men actually needed for the "firing battery" are with the guns. The rest, composed mostly of drivers, remain at the horse-line with the caissons and limbers. Every night, the ration-carts and water-wagons leave the horse-line for the front, to bring food and water to the cannoneers. Whenever ammunition is needed, the caissons come up with it at night. This means all-night work for the drivers who bring it up, and for the cannoneers who unload it at the battery position. And here let me pay a tribute to the drivers in the field artillery. No matter how bad the weather, they must come up to the battery position. No matter how many shells are landing on the road they are to travel, they must bring through the supplies and ammunition for the cannoneers. They cannot drop when they hear the warning whistle of an incoming shell. They must stay

close to their horses, never leaving them under any circumstances. A good driver must be one of the "gamest" men in the army.

After a few hours' sleep we were up and working again, getting things in readiness for the final move to the front, which, rumor had it, was to take place the following day. A large number of French troops were living in these woods, and it did not take them long to become fast friends with our boys. I could speak a little French and consequently was invited to take supper at the French sergeants' mess. Sergeants in the French army live on the "fat of the land." They have a separate mess and orderlies who wait on table; in short, they might almost be considered commissioned officers, as far as comfort is concerned. At six o'clock I made my way to my friend's dug-out, and was introduced, with great formality, to some six or seven other sergeants. I made use of my best French, such as it was, and they seemed to understand me fairly well. Supper was announced, and we entered another dug-out which was used as a sort of dining-room

and club-room. There we found a long table, with benches on either side, and a fireplace on one side of the room. It was very comfortable and homelike. We had scarcely seated ourselves when one of the sergeants at once proposed, "To the Americans, our brave comrades in arms," and we stood to drink the toast. I then gave them, "France, you who so nobly sacrificed your all for the cause of right." This last was greeted with great applause and at once we became "brothers in arms." The French are very particular about etiquette, and the smallest "faux-pas" of any kind may hurt their feelings deeply. The offer of payment for something intended for a gift, even to a peasant, may cause a great deal of mutual embarrassment. Once a friendship has been established, they are the most hospitable people on earth.

As the meal progressed, I was more than surprised at the elaborate supper. We had four courses followed by salad, cakes, and coffee. It was surprising how well we seemed to understand each other, and I plied them with ques-

tions regarding the sector which we were to take over. They all agreed that it was "un bon secteur," which at the time meant little to me, but on looking back from a really bad front, their description was excellent. I managed to learn that we were to take over a position near the "Chemin des Dames," which marked some of the heaviest fighting of the war: both in the previous year, when, after a German advance, the French re-took the ground which they then occupied, sustaining severe losses; and again, in the following spring during the drive in March and April, 1918. Before the Americans went up to the line the sector had been a quiet one with only occasional raids breaking the monotony of the life. How long it would remain quiet, after we reached the front, was a matter of conjecture.

When dinner was over, we sat around the table in the snug little dug-out listening to the experiences of these men, three of them wearing the Croix de Guerre with palms, won for gallantry at Verdun. Before I realized how rapidly the time was slipping away, I found that ten

o'clock had long since passed. I bade all my new friends a reluctant farewell, and making my way through the darkness (as no lights were allowed so near the front) I found my resting-place for the night: the ground and a blanket.

When we awoke the next morning it was to learn that the "skipper" with one of the lieutenants and the instrument and telephone sergeants had gone ahead to the battery position to look over the ground. It was a busy morning for the rest of us. The guns had to be cleaned, ammunition for the Colt "45's" issued to the men, and all surplus equipment turned in. The first four sections (gun sections), one park wagon with our field range and supplies, with the instrument and telephone details, machine gunners, ammunition and gas sergeants, two cooks, and two mechanics were the lucky ones chosen to "go up." I shall never forget how some of the other boys begged for a chance to go with us. I had at least forty applications from men who wanted to join my machine-gun detail. I



should have been glad to take them, but four were all that I was allowed to use.

We were ready to leave at one o'clock, but it was nearly two before Lieutenant Knauth, our executive officer, who had accompanied the captain in the morning, arrived at the horse-line. He gathered us together, told us that we were to move into an old French position which was thought by the Germans to have been abandoned. Nothing must be changed about the position that would show to enemy observers that a new battery had moved in. "Drivers prepare to mount, mount. Forward, Ho!" — and we were off with the good-byes of our less lucky friends ringing in our ears.

Our route took us for a short distance through the woods, then out into the open, and after passing several small villages, we came out on the bank of the Aisne River. Shell-holes were in evidence everywhere, miles and miles of barbed wire, with here and there a French *poilu* standing before the entrance to some dug-out. Crossing the river, we entered the town of

Vailly, and there I saw what real devastation meant. What had formerly been a beautiful little French town was now nothing but a heap of ruins. Scarcely a house had a roof. Heaps of stones and débris lined the road. As our guns and limbers rumbled through the streets, French soldiers appeared from cellars waving us "good luck" as we passed. As we left the town, the sun was slowly disappearing behind a long ridge of hills in the west, casting its golden rays across the fields, and touching here and there the small wooden crosses which marked the graves of those brave soldiers who had died for France; buried where they had fallen, on the field of honor.

We began to meet French troops coming the other way. Several companies of infantry marching along at "route order," followed by a battery of field artillery, all returning for a well-deserved rest.

The road ran along the side of a hill, winding around until it crossed a narrow-gauge railroad. There we stopped and waited for darkness, which was not long in coming. All



CAPTAIN GEORGE A. PARKER  
*Commanding C Battery*



the equipment was stripped from the park wagon and limbers, and we piled it by the roadside. At the command of Captain Parker the first piece moved on, alone, swerving to the left, off the road, pulled up before the position and was unlimbered. It was comparatively easy to run the gun back into the pit by hand, with the aid of three French soldiers who had come over from a neighboring battery to help us. The second, third, and fourth pieces followed in quick succession, and as the sounds from the last limber died away, we realized that the guns were in position, and ready to fire. The night was clear and still; not a sound broke the silence, which was almost oppressive. The stars twinkled merrily overhead, and a full moon shone down upon us. Some of the boys were really nervous because there were no shells landing. "The front," as we had pictured it, was a very different place from this quiet, peaceful spot. Now and then a star shell shot into the sky, telling us that our infantry was in front of us, always on the alert. We were all thoroughly tired out and eagerly sought a

dug-out where we might turn in. But no such luck! There were dug-outs for every one else, but none for the machine gunners. So we unrolled our blankets and stretched out in an old unused gun-pit, with the stars overhead, the earth beneath us, and a great desire for sleep.



## CHAPTER IV

### OUR FIRST SECTOR — CHEMIN DES DAMES

WE were up early the following morning, working on the position, repairing the gun-pits, and cleaning the dug-outs as much as possible. We were very fortunate in having excellent dug-outs, for the most part. They were at least thirty feet underground, comfortable and warm. Our position was well chosen. Situated on the side of a hill, with a steep descent of some fifty or sixty feet in our rear, it afforded a difficult target for the enemy, and was not particularly exposed to danger from gas-shells.

There is almost as much routine in the life at the front as there is in camp. We were up in the morning at half-past five. After mess those men not on regular guard duty did the necessary policing around the position. Noon mess was at twelve o'clock, and mess at night at six o'clock, providing the ration-cart arrived on time with supplies from the horse-line.

As to guard duty, there is more of that at

the front than anywhere else. In the first place, there is a guard in each gun-pit all day and all night, working in reliefs. A shell rests upon the trail of each gun and the breech is open. At a sudden call for barrage, either by rocket or by telephone, the guard loads the gun, closes the breech, and fires the shot. By that time the rest of the gun crew are awake and in the pit.

Then there is the rocket guard whose duty it is to watch for the rocket signals from the infantry. His duty is an important one. If, for any reason, he should not see the signal, it means that his battery will be late in starting the barrage, and that in consequence, perhaps, the lives of his own infantry will be sacrificed. In this particular sector we had several different rocket signals. They were: one red rocket, barrage; one green rocket, gas alert; one caterpillar rocket, increase range 150 meters; two caterpillar rockets, increase range 300 meters. Rocket signals differ in different sectors, but the principle is the same, and the man on rocket guard must always be on the alert, re-

membering that many lives may depend upon the quick response of his battery to calls from the front line.

There is also a gas guard whose duty it is to be continually on the watch, day and night, for any sign of gas. The alarm is usually given by sounding a Klaxon horn. This reminds me of an amusing incident which occurred in New York after my return. We had just stepped ashore when a huge truck came rapidly around the corner and sounded its Klaxon. I saw at least five boys, myself included, reach for their gas-masks which were hanging at their sides, and one lad had his half on before he realized where he was. Good gas discipline means getting on your mask when the Klaxon sounds, and asking questions afterwards.

Then there is the machine-gun guard, whose duty it is to watch for enemy airplanes and give the alarm so that the men can get under cover and not be seen by the observer, should he fly over the position: in which case the machine gunners fire on the plane until it either disappears or is brought down.

And last but not least there is the telephone guard. Day and night there is a man at the switch-board. The telephone is by far the best and most effective means of communication at the front. The duty of the telephone detail is to keep communication established under all conditions. I have seen telephone men out working on the lines under the heaviest possible shell-fire. They go right ahead splicing their wires and reëstablishing communication with the other units, regardless of personal danger. If a man is hit, another comes out and finishes the job. They don't fight; they make it possible for others to fire the guns. They just stand and "take it," with no chance to get back at the enemy. A telephone man at the front is "game" clean through.

It is surprising how soon we dropped into the regular routine of "life at the front." By noon mess we considered ourselves veterans. The topic of greatest interest to the boys was, "When do we fire the first shot, and which piece fires it?" There was intense good-natured rivalry among the boys as to which of the four

gun sections should have the honor of firing this first shot. ,

We spent the rest of the day making what improvements we could in the position. Our only excitement during the afternoon was four Boche planes which appeared in the distance. However, they did not come near enough for my boys on the machine gun to fire. We were all anxious for a chance to open up and beat the other sections to it, but unfortunately they stayed at a respectful distance.

That night I took supper with a French sergeant in his dug-out. We had become good friends during the afternoon and he invited me to come down to dine with him that evening. He lived with a corporal in the most palatial dug-out I have ever seen. It was spotless, with two neat bunks which were adorned by real sheets and pillows. We had a delicious meal and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I was the first American soldier he had ever spoken to, and consequently he was more than hospitable.

The following day was a repetition of the first, except for the fact that it rained, making

the digging around the position anything but pleasant. We were ready and anxious to fire, but it was not until the following morning at about ten-thirty that our executive officer, Lieutenant Knauth, ordered the gun crews to their posts, and at exactly 10.55 A.M. of February 9, 1918, the first piece of C Battery roared forth its challenge to the Huns, Lieutenant Knauth pulling the lanyard which sent the first shell on its way. It was a wonderful feeling to hear our guns banging away with the gunner corporals and number ones riding the seats of the guns like veterans, much to the surprise of the French who were there, watching us with interest. After firing a few rounds for "registration," "Cease fire" came over the telephone and the guns were re-laid on our "normal barrage," cleaned and ready for the next time. One might perhaps expect that the boys would be somewhat nervous, the first time, at least. A remark made by a classmate of mine at college, Eddie Hobbs, who was playing number one on the fourth piece, illustrated to perfection the feelings of the majority of the boys.



After the firing, Captain Parker, while making his rounds, stopped at the fourth piece and asked Eddie how it was riding. "Well," he replied, "she's a little rough, Captain, but if you'll lend me your spurs, I can manage to stick on." All the boys seemed to feel the same way; it was what they had come to France for, to fight, and they took everything with a smile, thoroughly enjoying any break in the monotony.

The following night we had our first real gas alarm. It was about ten o'clock at night when the alarm was given, and needless to say we did not require the regulation six seconds to get our masks on. It is a weird feeling to hear the alarm sounded for the first time, and although no shells had landed near us we were none of us sure whether there was really gas there or not, until one of the officers tested, and finding no sign of it whatever, gave the order to remove masks. It was simply an over-zealous guard, who, on duty for the first time, imagined he noticed gas; hence the alarm. On returning to my dug-out, I found one of the

boys asleep with his mask on. He seemed rather indignant at being awakened and told to take it off. It is possible to enjoy a really good night's sleep in a gas-mask, only upon awakening one has a somewhat similar feeling to "the morning after": a slight headache, etc.

Late in the afternoon of February 9, we saw some of our infantry pass the position on their way to the front. It was a detachment of the 101st Infantry, formerly the "Old Fighting Ninth" of Massachusetts. We saw them go by with a feeling of great respect, because it is the infantry that deserve the credit every time. Before we went over, back in the States, there was much rivalry between the infantry and artillery. But after we fired our first "creeping barrage," behind which our infantry went "over the top," those boys stopped at the battery position on their way back from the front, and at once an argument took place. Our boys declared that the infantry deserved all the credit for the success of the raid, while the "doughboys" were equally firm in asserting that but for the artillery they would not have

been successful. From that time on, whenever one of our boys met a "doughboy" some such exchange of remarks as this ensued.

Infantry: "Say, Buddy, that was one great barrage you threw over last night."

Artillery: "Lay off that stuff, friend, we hand it to you doughboys, every time."

Both: "S'long."

It is the perfect coöperation and team play between the two branches which makes success possible.

The weather was cold, and for the most part damp and disagreeable. We had an inspection by our brigade commander, General William L. Lassiter, and our colonel, John H. Sherburne, and things were found to be satisfactory. We were particularly fortunate in having such commanding officers. General Lassiter was a real soldier, and a natural leader of men, the kind of general who did not wait until there was a quiet day at the front before making his inspection. He was always with the men, enduring the same hardships that they endured. Cheerful, and eager to make things as comfort-

able as possible for the boys, he was respected and liked by all of them.

Colonel John H. Sherburne, of Brookline, is a splendid soldier. He never let an opportunity escape to say a word of encouragement to the boys. One evening while in billets one of the men in my battery was returning from a successful trip to the French canteen, carrying three bottles of champagne, and met the colonel. Now, according to strict military etiquette, my friend should have dropped his rather expensive burden upon the road, and standing at rigid attention,<sup>1</sup> should have saluted as per Drill Regulations. But as the hour was late, and he had walked long and far, and a delicious supper was awaiting him, he hurried by. The colonel saw his predicament, smiled, and saluted him. My friend smiled also; unable to salute, he nodded pleasantly and passed on. Some officers I have met would have stopped him, given him a thorough "bawling out," and confiscated the champagne. But not so with Colonel Sherburne; he was a human being. One of the highest tributes



BRIGADIER-GENERAL JOHN H. SHERBURNE

*Formerly Commanding 101st Field Artillery*



that could be paid him was a somewhat unmilitary remark made by a lad in the regiment: "He's a real feller, always pulling for the boys; I'd go through hell for that guy." And in saying this he expressed the general opinion of every man in the regiment.

Near our position the French had an observation balloon or "sausage" established, and on days when observation was possible, the balloon was always up. It seemed to annoy the Boches exceedingly, and several times enemy planes had made attempts to "get it," but the French had always been able to pull it down before the Boches were successful. One morning, however, all was quiet, when suddenly I heard the familiar drone of the German motor. I could see no plane, but as the sky was full of clouds I felt sure it must be lurking near. The noise of the motor grew louder and louder, when without any warning I saw the balloon burst into flames and the observer jump clear in his parachute. Then I saw the plane, a fighter, making for its own lines as fast as possible, while the French anti-aircraft guns



sought vainly to "drop" it. The airman had sneaked across, keeping above the clouds until he got directly over the "sausage," had done his work, and then hastened home, unharmed. Five minutes later another balloon was up in the same place, as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. "You can't keep a good man down."

I think perhaps the prettiest bit of flying I ever saw at the front happened that same afternoon, when one French plane was attacked by five Germans. It all took place directly over our heads and the machines were so low that one could easily make out, with the naked eye, the iron cross painted on the wings of the Boche planes. The machine guns were banging away, and to us it looked as if the French plane were doomed. They had it cornered, and were circling nearer and nearer, while the Frenchman was gradually drawing them over his own lines. Our machine gun started firing, and that was the signal, it seemed, for all the machine guns in the sector to "open up." But as far as I could see the

Boches did not seem particularly impressed. They kept right on, when suddenly the French plane dropped. Down it came, end over end, until it was some two hundred meters above the ground, then it straightened out, and sped safely back, having cleverly outwitted its pursuers. All the anti-aircraft batteries opened fire, and the German aviators hastily withdrew, no doubt thoroughly disgusted at having lost what to them must have appeared an easy prey. It was a remarkable bit of flying, considering the fact that the odds were five to one against the Frenchman.

Rumors were current that something interesting was about to happen. The orders were to "stand to" every morning at dawn, and this meant one of two things: either those higher up expected a German attack or they had a little "party" planned for us. It turned out to be the latter. On Saturday, February 23, the battery was up at 5 A.M. The gun crews were at their posts, and we were told that at "zero hour" we were to start our barrage. It was dark, and scarcely a sound could be heard

along the front, save the occasional "tack-tack-tack" of some machine gun. The minutes passed slowly; they seemed to drag. The captain was pacing up and down in the communication trench behind the gun-pits, anxiously peering at his watch from time to time. I was standing on the casemate of the fourth piece watching for rocket signals. We knew that our infantry was going "over the top" with the French, and as it was our first offensive barrage the boys were keyed up with expectancy. The telephone rang, and the captain was receiving his final instructions from the major. At twenty-eight minutes past five, our executive officer gave the command "Load." The four breech-blocks snapped shut as one. At exactly five-thirty the battery commander, with his ear to the telephone, commanded "Fire," and the four guns spoke as one. And at exactly the same moment every battery in that sector (there were twenty-eight of them, French and American) roared forth in unison. It was a wonderful sight. The sky for miles was illuminated by the flash of the guns. The

ground trembled, and the noise was deafening. In a short while I could see the flash of the Boche artillery against the sky as they started their barrage. The gun crews were working like a machine. Between the reports of the guns one could hear the "empties" as, thrown from the breech, they struck the trail of the piece. Thirty minutes elapsed, when suddenly I saw a white rocket shoot into the sky and burst into twelve stars. It was the signal for "objective reached." I had no sooner told the captain than orders came over the telephone, "Cease fire." The firing stopped as suddenly as it had begun, and all was silent once more.

It was nearly noon before we heard the details of the raid, for such it proved to be. We saw some of the boys who had "gone over," as they stopped at the battery to praise our barrage. A platoon of Americans had attacked with the French, but our boys had taken only twenty-three prisoners, much to the disgust of the "poilus" who declared they could have taken five times as many had they not killed them all. A French sergeant describing the

affair to me in broken English (he had lived in the States for a while) said, "Ze Americans fight good, but zey take no prisoners; zey kill, kill, kill." We all felt that the only good German was a dead one.

Among the prisoners taken were two officers, one of them a captain. The American sergeant, a Charlestown lad, who had led the raid, and who now wears a Croix de Guerre for his bravery, was in charge of the prisoners. The Boche captain came up to him in a very haughty manner and demanded that inasmuch as he was a captain in the German army, he should be respected as such, and not be forced to associate with the privates. The sergeant, who is somewhat over six feet in height, stared at him for a moment, then quietly "dropped" the captain, with a gentle tap on the point of the jaw, and the latter, when he came to, was more than glad to associate with the German privates, taking great care to place them all between himself and the sergeant.

One must not think that it was all work and

no play at the front. There were times when the boys would gather in a dug-out and have a party. There was a French canteen within walking distance of our position and one could purchase chocolate, cheese, crackers, jam, and champagne. Then at night, five or six of us would gather in my dug-out and have a real "feast." Any kind of food which broke the monotony of "canned willy" and "hard-tack" seemed to us delicious. One night I remember we were in the midst of a very enjoyable repast when we heard the drone of several Boche motors, and extinguishing our candles we went outside to see what "was up." It was a clear night, and a full moon was in the heavens. We could hear the machines very distinctly. Searchlights were playing over the sky in an attempt to locate the planes. As I glanced up, I saw a plane silhouetted against the moon, headed in the general direction of our horse-line. Soon we heard explosions which we knew to be bombs, and by this time the anti-aircraft guns were busy. The "party" continued for about half an hour, bombs dropping fairly



near our position. The Boches at the end of that time, having evidently run out of their supply of bombs, decided to return, and flew slowly back, passing over our heads. When all was still once more, we resumed our "feast" where we had broken off. We were enjoying ourselves thoroughly when we heard the rumbling of caisson wheels on the road. I went to the door just in time to hear some one shout "Ammunition for C Battery." If there is anything which really causes one to be disgusted with life, it is the news that "Ammunition is coming up to-night." It means that every man must turn out, officers included; a line is formed and the shells passed from hand to hand from the caissons to the ammunition pits. We had eleven hundred rounds that night, and when you consider that every man handles each shell as it is passed up the line, it means quite a night's work. No lights are allowed, and one's sense of touch soon becomes highly perfected.

The following morning I went back with some of the men to the town of Vailly to take



a bath. A bath at the front is a luxury which is seldom enjoyed. It was the first time in nearly five weeks that we had our clothes really off. When one prepares for a night's sleep at the front, the process of undressing consists of removing helmet, shoes, and leggins. When morning comes, little time is lost over one's toilet, consequently the prospect of a bath was most delightful to us. When we arrived, all the hot water had been used, so cold water was our lot. Cold water on a cold day is not exactly conducive to comfort. However, we felt much refreshed and imagined ourselves fairly clean as we hiked back to the battery ready for another bathless month.

The month of February closed with much rain and hail. It was quite cold, and the warm socks and sweaters which we had received from home were in great demand. The weather as a whole had been poor, and one of the boys expressed the general sentiment of the battery when he remarked, "Where in hell do they get this stuff about sunny France?"

March came in with its usual dreary weather.

We had a real old-fashioned New England blizzard, and it snowed so hard and long that my dug-out, which I had built with much pick and shovel labor, was completely snowed under. We spent most of the day and night in attempting to keep warm, but, as few of us were Christian Scientists, this ended in failure. Captain Parker read us an order in which the 101st Field Artillery was cited for "Coolness under fire." This did much to restore our good spirits and as the snow disappeared in a few days, our troubles were over temporarily.

Now that the position had been well repaired and we were as comfortable as it is possible to be at the front, the officers decided to move the battery to another position. Our new position was decidedly a change for the better. It was ideal from the point of view of concealment and comfort. It was under a covering of camouflage, and there was a small track running the entire length. The entrances to the dug-outs faced this track, and in the morning it was the usual custom to have mess brought to your dug-out door on the hand-car

which constituted the rolling stock of the road. The service was far better than that in any of our first-class hotels.

By this time the Germans knew that there were Americans in the sector, and although it had been comparatively quiet heretofore, things began to "warm up," and it was not long before the sector became a lively one. We had our batteries so well concealed that the Boches had great difficulty in locating them. Enemy planes were up all day, but they were unsuccessful in their attempt to "spot" us. They did, however, try an ingenious scheme to make us give away our positions. One night about nine o'clock, our infantry called for barrage, and the battery opened fire at once. In the meantime several enemy planes came over with their motors muffled and flying very slowly. The trick was soon discovered, and the battery "ceased fire" immediately. We discovered later that a few Germans had started over with the idea of having our boys think it was a trench raid. When they called for barrage and we responded, the planes came over

in an attempt to discover the location of our batteries by the flash of the guns. The attempt was unsuccessful, and the anti-aircraft batteries and machine guns soon made things warm for the "avions," and they flew back, minus one of their number.

There were many rumors heard on all sides regarding a big enemy offensive. It seemed impossible to us that the Germans could break through, and yet the French were continually constructing new machine-gun emplacements; miles and miles of new barbed-wire entanglements seemed to spring up overnight. To us it seemed impossible to conceive of a German advance, and yet the French, as usual, knew what they were doing. Among other signs of increased activity was the large number of enemy planes which were in evidence day and night. One aviator in particular, more daring than the others, would come over every morning between the hours of four and six, flying very low and watching for any sign of life on cross-roads. Finally the major gave orders for all of our machine gunners to be on the watch

for this particular Boche. I was up myself the next morning, hoping that this aviator would "be over," but as usual he fooled us and stayed away. However, the next morning, after "standing to" for an hour and a half in the cold of the early dawn, I descried this plane well in our rear flying, slowly and near to the ground, in our direction. Some of our infantry in reserve were quartered behind us in dug-outs, and the only time of day they were allowed above-ground was just at dawn. These "doughboys," all unaware of their danger, were eating mess, when the Boche cut loose on them with his machine gun. They scattered instantly and I opened up with my Hotchkiss machine gun in an attempt to drive him off. He did not tarry long, but flew back to his own lines, content with firing a few rounds in passing. He never troubled us again, and I heard that soon after the plane was brought down by an anti-aircraft gun, and the aviator was found to be a woman. According to report she was a countess and had taken up flying in an attempt to avenge the death of her husband, who had been brought

down by a well-known French Ace some time before. At all events, the aviator, whether a man or woman, was one of the most daring flyers I saw at the front.

Activity along the lines was increasing from time to time. On Sunday, March 16, the Germans fired a heavy gas concentration directed upon our front line. This continued for nearly twenty-four hours, and there were many casualties resulting, both among the French and among our infantry. Our artillery was active and gave the Boches two shells to their one, and it was most satisfactory to hear from our observers that ambulances were busy for two days behind the German lines. The gas shells were landing from five hundred to one thousand meters in front of our battery position, but as the wind was blowing away from us, we luckily escaped any damage. The following night we were called upon for a barrage, which proved to be our last at this front, for the next day we received orders to be ready to move by 9 P.M. and we learned that we were to be relieved in this sector by the French. The boys



were sincerely sorry to go. We had been at the front for six weeks, and it was the best six weeks that I had spent, up to that time, in the army. We knew that in all probability a long road hike lay before us, and a road hike means *walk* for the cannoneers. We had never really been shelled during that entire six weeks, due in large measure to the care of Captain Parker in keeping the position hidden from the enemy observers, and yet we had done much effective work against the enemy. In other words, we had thrown stones at a man, and he had not thrown them back at us: a pleasant occupation from our standpoint. But when he began to throw them back, we realized that life at the front was not all giving and no taking. Most people would rather take than give, in this world, but decidedly *no*, when shells are the medium of exchange. So it was that we were sorry to leave the front, and on looking back upon those six weeks they were not only the best we had spent up to that date, but they were the best six weeks we spent in France.

It was a walk of nine kilometers, or more,



done for the most part at "double time," and the drivers had many a good laugh at the expense of the cannoneers, who were trudging along, packs on back, envying the luck of the drivers who were so comfortably mounted. We spent the following day at the horse-line in packing up, and preparing for a long road march.

## CHAPTER V

### JOIN THE ARTILLERY AND — WALK

ON Wednesday, March 20, the entire battery was up at 2 A.M. It was raining hard, dark as pitch, and there were a million things to be done. We “harnessed and hitched” in total darkness save for here and there the “dim religious light” of a lantern. Most of the “carriages” were stuck fast in the mud, especially the two park wagons, and the most popular command was, “Cannoneers on the wheels.” Oh, the “cannoneers are in bad” when they are not actually at the front! If any disagreeable task has to be performed, the “buck” is passed to the cannoneers and they are the “goats,” much to the amusement of the drivers who are in their element on a road hike. As the cannoneers are the “kings” when the guns are at the front, so are the drivers “monarchs of all they survey” when the battery is on the march.

Finally, after much pulling and hauling, all

the carriages were ready and the command was given, "Drivers mount, cannoneers in rear of your pieces, fall in." I was not mounted, and so I sought the little band of cannoneers marching behind the fourth piece. Although not attached to any section, I always, on road hikes, accompanied the fourth, because the chief of that section, Sergeant Ernest O'Callaghan, a Dorchester boy, and the gunner, Corporal Bill Sweeney, of Somerville, were my two best friends in the battery, and at night, whether at the front or on the march, we three always rolled up together in our blankets. Corporal Sweeney was also dismounted, and we would plod along looking with longing eyes at those seats upon the limbers, unused and vacant, because the extra weight of the cannoneers seated upon the limbers might tire the horses, and a horse, as every good artilleryman knows, is much more necessary to the efficiency of the battery than a man. I will never, as long as I live, forget how one day, after we had walked and run fifteen kilometers (keeping up as best we could with the pace set by the



CORPORAL WILLIAM J. SWEENEY  
*Gunner Fourth Piece*



horses), the officers took pity upon the cannon-eers and ordered them to mount the limbers. There were seats for all the men in the fourth section except Bill Sweeney and myself, and room for one of us, but not both. Extract from ensuing conversation:

Corp. Sweeney: "Get up; there's a seat for you."

Corp. Washburn: "Get up yourself; I don't belong in this section."

Corp. Sweeney: "Don't be so damned obstinate. I don't want to ride."

Corp. Washburn: "Neither do I."

(Conversation ceases while two more kilometers are covered, each inwardly raging at the obstinacy of the other.)

Corp. Sweeney: "Will you get up there and ride?"

Corp. Washburn: "No, I'll walk."

Corp. Sweeney: "So'll I."

(Both in undertone, loud enough to be heard) "He's a damned fool."

Walk they did in silence with a perfectly good seat vacant till the battery halted, some

ten kilometers farther on. Conversation resumed:

Corp. Sweeney: "Well, how do you feel?"

Corp. Washburn: "Like hell; how are you?"

Corp. Sweeney: "I saw a farmhouse back there."

Corp. Washburn: "Let's go!"

(Hastening away they managed to arrive at the nearest farmhouse where fresh eggs and milk could be had for a slight consideration.)

Our destination was Soissons, nearly twelve miles distant, where we were to entrain. When we had almost reached the outskirts of the town, we could distinctly hear firing all along the front. The boys were homesick at the sound. We later learned that it was the beginning of the German spring drive; not many days elapsed before the Boches were again in possession of the very ground on which we stood. It seemed almost as if they had waited until the Americans were relieved before they started their "push."

We reached the station, thoroughly tired, and anxious to get the battery entrained and



away, so that we could settle down in those box-cars, and have a few hours of uninterrupted sleep.

The battery had profited well by its first experience at entraining, and it was a comparatively simple matter to get things aboard with little or no delay. We pulled out of the station shortly before noon, with rations for twenty-four hours. Most of the boys spread their blankets in an attempt to catch a few hours' sleep. We had no definite information regarding our destination, but the general impression was that we were to go through "open-warfare" maneuvers in conjunction with our infantry. It seemed to some of the boys that it was a little rough to take an outfit from the front and put it through maneuvers behind the lines. As things turned out, however, we never went through the "despised" training, but as a result of a sudden change of orders, and much to the delight of the men, the division went back to the lines.

The trip was a pleasant one; but not long enough. Early the following morning, we ar-

rived at Brienne le Château where we de-trained, hitched in, assaulted the "soup gun" for some hot coffee, and were on our way before 8.30 A.M.

The road hike that morning was a most picturesque one. Spring was in the air, and as the sun shone down, its rays were reflected from the thin sheet of frost which covered the ground. Our route lay through a small French village nestling upon the side of a hill. Far from the war zone, the town had lost none of its quaint beauty. The inhabitants appeared prosperous and well-dressed: in strong contrast to the poverty so common in the villages near the front. The streets were clean, the houses well-painted and attractive. In short, it was a most pleasing sight, and a glimpse of what France had been before the outbreak of war. We had all hoped that we were to be billeted in this village, but our area lay in a small town some five or six kilometers farther on, and we hastened forward, the cannoneers, as usual, on foot adapting their pace to that of the horses. It was nearly noon when we arrived at our

billets. We strung our picket-lines, watered and fed the horses, and sought our resting-place for the night.

Now I feel sure that the general opinion among people who have never seen a billet in a French town is about as follows: A picturesque little French house, neat and clean, where American lads are eagerly welcomed by the "madame," who conducts the tired soldiers to the room where they are to spend the night. In this room stand two large, old-fashioned feather beds, with their snowy, linen sheets most inviting to the eye. Then can be pictured the evening meal: seated at the table are the old grandfather, the madame with her three small children, and "les soldats américains." The meal progresses amidst much consumption, on the part of the soldiers, of eggs, milk, potatoes, etc. We can picture this happy family, after supper, with the small children sitting trustingly on the knees of our boys, much to the delight of the good lady. So the evening passes until bedtime. Then we see the soldiers gently sinking into the fond

embrace of the feather beds; deliciously comfortable and happy, they slowly slip into the land which knows no peer — Sleep.

Now we come to reality. The meaning of the word “billet,” to those who know, is a place to sleep, usually a barn, sometimes a field. The barn is invariably old, anything but waterproof, also cold, affording little or no protection from the wind which whistles uninvitingly through large cracks in the boards, expressly prepared for this purpose it seemed to us. A pile of straw or hay in the center of the dirt floor offers sleeping accommodations for all. There is generally enough to provide half the number of men with a handful each. The others sleep on the cold, bare ground. Any man who has escaped “cooties” before can rest assured that he will find them in abundance in billets. Having established ourselves on the least draughty side of the building, we seek some place in the town where a good meal may be purchased. Eggs and milk can be had for a rather large compensation. They are well worth any price, however, and the meal is

good. We retire to our barn, unable to have a light because of the danger of fire (which would be a great blessing to other troops that may follow us), unroll our blankets and make our beds in the dark upon the floor which has been packed hard by many generations of feet. Comfortable at last, we fall asleep with the fragrant odor of many cattle in close proximity. These were our billets.

Reveille was early the next morning, and the day was spent in cleaning our equipment, grooming horses, washing material, and policing the picket-line. A typical day of rest in the army.

We were on the road the following day, and "hiked" until noon when we billeted in the small town of Chausine, a barn serving as our shelter. Palm Sunday was a beautiful day, warm and sunny with a distinct touch of spring in the air. It was the one day of real rest which we had enjoyed since January. In the afternoon a baseball game was arranged between the drivers and cannoneers, which proved a great success. The road march upon the following

day was a long one, and our destination was the town of Theil. We were given to understand that we were on our way to our permanent billets, where we were to have rest for two or three weeks. It was good news, and all the boys were eagerly anticipating a change of clothes and many baths to make up for lost time.

We arrived at these billets on March 27. C Battery was quartered in the town of Vigne, one of the dirtiest and most uncomfortable places I have ever seen. It was a hike of some twenty-three miles or more, the longest up to date, and we were all thoroughly tired. I found, much to my disgust, that I was one of the corporals of the stable guard that night. The boys were scattered over the town, some sleeping in barns and others pitching "pup tents." It was a difficult task to get my relief together inasmuch as some of the more weary ones had camouflaged themselves very successfully in the hay. The duty of the stable guard is to keep a strict watch on the horses. If any break away from the picket-line, the guard



must catch and tie them. On a dark, rainy night it is anything but a pleasant task to spend two hours following some horse from one end of the field to the other; the private on guard soon learns this and calls the corporal of the guard at the least provocation, preferring to see the latter pursue the horse rather than to do it himself.

Now that we had arrived at our permanent billets, we learned that the orders had been changed, and that the division, instead of having a rest, was to go up at once to the front. The one incident of interest which occurred was the passing of Secretary of War Baker through our town in a large and comfortable limousine. The arrival of mail, coupled with the news that we were to return to the front, set everybody in the best of spirits. I can truthfully say that every man in the battery was heartily glad to shake the mud (not dust, as there is very little of the latter) of Vigne from his boots. The billets had proved permanent for one day, and that was twenty-four hours too long, we thought.



We marched approximately thirty-three kilometers to Neuf Château, and passing through the town, we arrived at Colombey, our resting-place for the night. There were many signs that we were nearing the front, such as machine-gun emplacements, "abris," and our old friend barbed wire. They were all pleasing sights to the boys, as we were thoroughly sick of doing nothing but hike and groom horses.

## CHAPTER VI

### IN THE TOUL SECTOR

THE 3d of April found the first platoon on its way to the front, relieving a platoon of F Battery of the 7th Field Artillery. The guns pulled into position at ten o'clock at night near the town of Rambucourt in the Toul Sector. Our battery position was a short distance to the left of "Dead Man's Curve," a notoriously bad stretch of road, continually shelled by the Boches, who gave us a royal welcome with H.E. (high-explosive) and gas. We found the dug-outs anything but shell-proof, which fact did not worry us in the least, as we were more than glad to be "on the line" again.

The second platoon made their relief the following night, and our division had now taken over the sector. We were given to understand, by those whom we relieved, that there was much enemy activity. The Boches were on higher ground than our boys, and consequently the advantage was with them. We had scarcely

been in position one day before we, too, realized that the sector was not a quiet one. With unpleasant regularity the Boches would throw over gas at mess-time. It did not take us long to rearrange our eating-schedule, but the enemy seemed to know of the change almost as soon as the battery. We found the inhabitants—what few there were—on the whole rather unfriendly. They seemed to have pro-German sympathies and we were warned to be on the lookout for spies. The little town of Mandres was near our battery positions, and it was constantly being shelled. It was at this time that we made the acquaintance of the Austrian “88’s,” or “whiz-bangs,” as they are familiarly known. These guns are more effective than the German “77’s” as the shells give little or no warning of their approach. In the case of the Austrian “88’s,” it is almost impossible to throw one’s self on the ground before the shell bursts, once it is on its way. The name “whiz-bang” describes them very accurately. One hears a whiz in the air, and the explosion of the projectile follows almost

immediately. The German guns, however, were more to our liking. One could, upon hearing the warning whistle of a "77" shell, seek a soft spot on the ground and flatten one's self in a leisurely manner. The Austrian guns are most effective, and no one who has been on the "receiving end" is likely to forget them. In this sector the enemy pursued an entirely different policy from that at Soissons. They seemed ready to "open up" upon the least provocation. I remember one day when a friend of mine, Corporal Ralph Lindsey, our acting ammunition sergeant, on his way to regimental headquarters with the daily report, stopped for a moment on the road to Beaumont. A Boche observation balloon was up and the road was in direct view. My friend paused for a moment, conversing with an acquaintance, when a shell landing some twenty yards away terminated the conversation and he hurried down the road in the direction of headquarters. Other shells followed in rapid succession until finally Lindsey sought the welcome protection of a ditch. The firing

ceased, and he completed his mission without further annoyance. In telling of his experience, he seemed much pleased to think that the Boches were so anxious to "get him" that they should have wasted some ten or a dozen rounds upon one man. "I'll bet no general ever had such a compliment," he added, and he was undoubtedly right. The Boches seemed to think that by such methods they could worry our boys and thereby reduce the morale, but instead of worrying our men such tactics amused them.

As I mentioned before, our position was an extremely poor one. It had been accurately "spotted" by the enemy, and I noticed that our friends from the 7th Field Artillery, whom we had relieved, were glad to get away from the place. Consequently, after repairing the position as best we could, orders came down to be ready to move to another some two miles to the left on the outskirts of a small neighboring town. Our new position was nothing more or less than a mud-hole. There were three dug-outs in the place, and all of them



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were full of water. The captain's dug-out, the best of the three, had water covering the floor to a depth of three feet. The entire night was spent in getting the guns into position, and well I remember that it took twelve of us from eleven at night till six the next morning to move the first piece some fifteen or twenty feet into its gun-pit. The mud was waist-deep in some places, and when dawn broke at last, the entire battery, as they fell in to march up to the mess, appeared more like a conglomeration of mud-balls than soldiers in the American Army. The majority of the men slept in the town, and those of us who stayed at the position pitched "pup" tents and were fairly comfortable.

The following night one of the men on rocket guard noticed a light flashing suspiciously toward the German lines. It was a significant fact that the town was apparently immune to enemy shelling. There were several inhabitants, for the most part old people, who lived there in comparative safety. All things pointed to treachery on the part of some of

these people, and we did our best to locate the spies. I heard one story, the veracity of which I cannot vouch for, to the effect that an old woman, who had been selling apples to our boys in the town of Mandres, had been watched and followed to her home, only to find that she was not a woman, but a man in disguise. A telephone with a line running to the German trenches was also found in the cellar. Such a thing was possible, and there is no doubt that the enemy had arranged a system of signals whereby they were informed of the movements of American troops.

We spent but a few days in the "mud-hole" position, as we called it. Our orders to move again were received at 6.45 P.M. on April 12. We were to be on our way by eight o'clock, which meant quick work. I was on a detail to load one of the park wagons with the telephone and machine-gun equipment when the Boches cut loose with gas. It was our first real gas attack, and we knew it was no false alarm because one could smell the chlorine on all sides. We all slipped on our masks, and went on with

the loading. It is no pleasant evening's sport to load a large wagon with one's gas-mask on, and we were all thoroughly glad when the wagon pulled out of the town, we following on foot. As we passed through Mandres, we found that the enemy were shelling the road ahead of us. If there was any one who had had doubts up to this time as to the veracity of the spy rumors, they were dispelled once and for all, as the Boches had our movements timed to a nicety. Bad luck seemed to follow us. We had hardly started when one of the park wagons got stuck in a ditch, and it was necessary to unload it, pull it out by hand, and reload it before we could continue.

We fully believed that we were bound for Cambrai, for rumors of a big German drive had reached us, and, if this were true, we all knew that we were in for some real fighting. It was this news which encouraged us more than anything else, as we knew we had a forced march before us. Most of the men, save the drivers, were on foot, and we plodded along covering mile after mile in silence except for

the occasional boom of a gun in the distance. About three o'clock in the morning, we halted in a small town to await orders. A railroad ran along by the side of the road, and three flat-cars were reposing peacefully upon the track. Two other boys and myself stepped aboard and stretched out on the floor, intent upon snatching a few moments' sleep. At once we dozed off, when suddenly hearing a yell, and looking over the side of the car, I saw that we were moving rapidly down the track. I awakened my companions and we all jumped, just in time to escape being carried away. While we were asleep an engine had been coupled to the cars and started away with us. Truly the gods were against us, and the only place left to sleep was the road. One of our number, whose sense of smell was keener than the rest, located a "doughboy" kitchen. Upon entering it we were invited to partake of some hot oatmeal, bread, and bacon. I don't think anything ever tasted so good to me as that meal, and those cooks, whoever they may be, will always hold a warm place in our hearts.

The orders were not long in coming, and we were on our way by sunup. On and on we walked, changing with the drivers now and then for a brief rest. Toward noon we reached what proved to be our horse-line, and after an hour's delay started up once more for the front. We put the guns into position at 7 P.M., unloaded eight caissons of ammunition, and then those men who were not on guard were allowed to turn in. It was our first twenty-four hours straight without sleep, and at the time it seemed to us "real soldiering." If we could only have looked into the future we should have called it an easy day.

Our battery position proved to be located upon a hill overlooking the little town of St. Julien. It was the best position we ever moved into. A French battery had been there before us, and the French have no equals when it comes to constructing dug-outs and gun emplacements. We were told that things had been quiet before our arrival, but the Boches evidently knew of our coming and the next morning welcomed us with as pretty a



bit of shelling (mixed gas with H.E. for good measure) as was my good fortune to see. One reason for the "fireworks" may have been the fact that the following day was Sunday, which was usually a very busy day for both sides. Many a time I have lost track of the days of the week, and the only way in which I was able to identify Sunday was by the marked increase in enemy activity.

It was evident that the Boches were restless, and not a day went by without our being treated to a bombardment. Again the enemy selected mess-time for their shelling, and it caused much annoyance to our boys. Without any warning whatever the shells would burst in close proximity to the kitchen, thereby discouraging the cooks in their good work, with the result that our meals were often cold. I remember well one day, when one of the boys in the fourth section, with his mess-kit full of soup and his cup full of coffee, was making his way with difficulty along a narrow path back to the dug-out, there to enjoy the luxury of a really hot repast, the enemy selected this par-

ticular moment for "opening up," and soon the shell fragments were whistling merrily through the air. Most of the boys were in the dug-outs and those unfortunate ones caught in the open were hugging the ground in the most affectionate manner. Our friend with the mess-kit, however, kept steadily on, glancing neither to the right nor to the left. His one ambition in life seemed to be to keep his equilibrium upon the treacherous path. Several men shouted to him to "drop" until the bombardment was over, but he paid not the least attention to these well-meaning friends. One shell splinter hit his cup, spilling a few drops of coffee. This seemed to annoy my friend greatly to judge from the expression on his face, but his eye never wavered for a second from the slippery path. At last he gained his objective, the dug-out, and was lost to view. Some time later, in the afternoon, I met him and asked why he took such an unnecessary risk, and why he had not dropped upon the ground. He glanced at me for a moment in amazement and replied: "Do you think I was going to take a chance on



spilling the first hot mess I've had in a month, by dropping on the ground just because a few shells were landing near? Nothing doing; as it was I lost some coffee." I might add that when the shelling ceased and the rest of us finally got our mess, it was cold.

The weather, for the first ten days, was cloudy and rainy. There were comparatively few planes about, either American or Boche, and most of our spare time was spent indoors, our snug dug-outs forming a pleasing contrast to the cheerless rain which fell in abundance. There was a French battery of "75's" about a hundred yards to our left, and within easy view from our position. It was a constant source of amusement to watch these Frenchmen playing soccer within four thousand yards of the lines, as unconcerned as if they were in Paris. One day the Boches started shelling their battery at a critical point in the game. As the first shell landed, the game ceased and the men disappeared, leaving the ball alone upon the field. In about twenty minutes, when the shelling had stopped, they returned, re-

suming the game as if nothing more serious than a thunderstorm had caused the delay. It was a typical example of the French spirit.

While the poor weather continued, there was comparatively little for the machine gunners to do, so the captain gave us the privilege of standing on rocket guard; each man doing a shift of two hours and a quarter every night. Our battery was so placed that if called on to fire a barrage by a rocket from the infantry, Second Battalion Headquarters, which was in front of us and to our left, relayed the signal from the front line to us, and we, in turn, relayed it to three batteries which were behind a hill in our rear. It was perfectly apparent that if we should miss the signal, not only our battery, but those three depending on our rocket, would fail to fire. Each man as he went on guard was given two signal pistols, one containing a red rocket and the other a green, the former being the signal for our "normal barrage," and the latter for "gas alert." It was necessary to stand for the entire time in practically the same position, as our eyes were

focused on one point, Second Battalion Headquarters. The first three or four nights passed uneventfully, and I stood for two and one quarter hours each night with nothing to break the monotony of my lonely vigil. The following night my shift on guard was from 2.45 to 5 A.M. When I went on, I asked the man whom I relieved how things were, and he answered that everything was quiet. I took my post on a small hill directly over the gun-pit of the first piece and, after examining the signal pistols to make sure they were in working order, settled myself for a dreary wait. A thick, low-hanging mist made it difficult to distinguish the blur of woods which, on a clear night, were visible from my position. Not a sound broke the stillness save the guard in the first section gun-pit who was softly singing to himself some snatch of song, popular music of the previous year, as he paced to and fro near the trail of the gun. It seemed as if there were no war, and that we were alone. Even the machine guns in the trenches, usually so active, seemed to have fallen asleep. The damp fog which enveloped

us in its grayish mantle broke for a moment and I saw the first faint signs of dawn in the east. It was the usual time for attack, and I wondered at the unnatural stillness. A flare lit up the sky for a brief moment, settling slowly to earth in its curving flight. Then silence and darkness once more. Suddenly a machine gun awoke from its lethargy, and this, in turn, was followed by another and still another. More flares shot heavenward and a white and red rocket—a Boche signal—curved across the sky. Something was doing down in front, and as the machine-gun fire increased, punctuated now and again by the deeper report of some enemy field-piece, I knew it would not be long before the call came for our artillery to lend a hand. There “it broke,” the red rocket I had been so eagerly awaiting, the signal from the front line to battalion headquarters. A second or two slipped by,—they seemed like hours,—and then, directly in front, rose another red rocket, my signal. Before it was fairly in the air, I had fired my pistol and shouted “normal barrage.”

Our second piece answered with a roar, and the other guns followed, banging away at top speed. What had been, but a moment before, absolute stillness was transformed into a veritable inferno, the ground shaking under my feet as the remaining three batteries in the regiment "opened up." We fired five barrages that night, one after another, the Boches coming back at us whenever we slackened our fire. As dawn appeared and both sides gradually ceased fire, a shell burst well in our rear and a fragment whizzed over my head, making a noise like a "kitchen stove" as it passed, and landed some few feet away. It proved to be the last from the Boches that morning, and as I slipped into my bunk to snatch a few hours' sleep, I realized that the remark once made to me by an old French sergeant was all too true. It was, "*Quand les choses sont les plus calmes au front, gardez-vous contre l'attaque.*" Which, being translated, means: When things are the most peaceful at the front, watch for an attack.

## CHAPTER VII

### OUR LOYAL FRIEND THE COOTIE

THERE is one subject, a very important one, connected with military life in France, which may be somewhat painful to the æsthetic taste of some of my readers. If this is so, pray skip the following pages until the narrative is resumed upon a somewhat higher plane. The subject I refer to is that of the humble "cootie," who plays such a leading part in the life of every soldier at the front. Sharing the same dangers, undergoing the same hardships, the cootie, once one has acquired the habit, is constantly reminding one that no matter how dangerous the life, he will not leave his new-found friend. In other words, once the cooties get you, they are with you to the end. Some of the wise ones may seek to play upon the credulity of the unknowing and claim that, although they were at the front six months, they never had cooties. If you ever hear such a statement made, one of two things is true: either the one



who made the statement was never at the front, or else he is a disciple of Ananias. No, everybody has them, officers and men alike. A cootie shows no preference between the humblest "buck" in the regiment and him who wears a gold leaf upon his shoulder. Cooties are democratic in the highest sense of the word, they "love them all."

In the training at Camp Coetquidan, it was a comparatively simple task to keep clean. Every soldier in the regiment had the "Saturday night privilege" at least once a week. At the front it was a different story. A bath with hot water once a month was a luxury, and more often one had recourse to shell-holes for one's bathing-water. Even the most fastidious in the battery hardly averaged more than seven or eight baths from February to July. It was simply out of the question, that's all. This being the state of affairs, Mr. Cootie rapidly took advantage of us, and made the most of our lack of bathing facilities. Toward the last of April, the majority of the battery freely admitted that they had discovered the unwell-



come guests, but I made no incriminating statements one way or the other. True, I had not discovered any up to that time, but for the very good reason that I had not looked. Believing firmly in the theory that what one does not know does not exist, I postponed the fatal moment as long as possible. One night, however, while on guard, something told me that modest as I might wish to appear, I was not alone in my glory. So when I returned to my dug-out I found an old friend of mine, Sergeant MacDuffie, chief of the first section, awake and reading an old paper. I begged him to put it aside for a few moments and assist me in my unpleasant task.

Sergeant MacDuffie had recently returned from the First Army Corps School at Gondrecourt, where he had had ample opportunities to bathe, and appeared horrified when I mentioned my suspicions regarding the cooties. Before the war we had planned to room together at college, but through circumstances over which we had no control we were bunking together, at this time, in a dug-out. I supplied

him with one of those indicators used by elevator starters in counting the number of people entering a building, and used by us to keep a record of the number of incoming shells from the Boches. After removing the necessary garments, I proceeded to take account of stock, my friend registering each cootie as I discovered him. It was late at night and we were both tired, so, after reaching the thirties, we desisted in our search. Otherwise it would have been an all-night job. I will never forget the look of disgust registered upon the sergeant's face, and I hastened to remark that I supposed he too was troubled with cooties. "I should say not!" he replied; "how can you think such a thing possible?" He had hardly made this denial when I noticed his hand steal stealthily beneath his blouse and begin a systematic scratching. I retired to my bunk for a good night's sleep, glad to find that I had an unwilling companion in my misery. I made the following note in my diary: "May 2nd. Wonderful day; best we have had so far up here, which is n't saying much. Plenty of Boche

planes around. I am a real soldier now, just found 34 cooties and one that must have weighed at least one-half pound."

Yes; from that time on, they never left me; and I can remember with what a keen sense of satisfaction I discovered my last. After reaching New York, having bathed zealously on shipboard during the return trip, I turned him loose on Fifth Avenue, feeling that one who had shown such devotion to me as to follow me from France to America at least deserved to be permitted to enjoy the sights on the fashionable avenue of our great metropolis — alone.

During the latter part of April, and the early days in May, we noticed a marked increase in enemy aerial activity. There was a French anti-aircraft battery very near our own position and they were very busy during the day. I walked over, one evening, to pay a visit to these Frenchmen. They had been in this same position for the past three years, and their living quarters were almost palatial. The officer

in charge lived in a small house, well under the lee of a hill. There were even flower pots in the windows, and a narrow path leading to the door. One of the poilus told me that although they had been there three years, as yet they had never brought down an enemy plane. The men seemed in good spirits, and the personnel of the battery was composed, for the most part, of soldiers who had either been wounded or gassed and had been transferred to this less dangerous branch of the service. The system employed by this battery in "spotting" an enemy plane was as follows: A man from the battery was always in the front-line trenches. Whenever a hostile plane came over he at once communicated with the battery, the "alert" signal was given, and the men took their posts at the guns, ready to fire when the hostile "avion" appeared. This battery never fired after dark, because the enemy were doing their best to locate its position, and the flashes from the guns were easily visible at night. It was most interesting to see a French battery of this type, and I received many valuable sug-

gestions regarding anti-aircraft work from these Frenchmen.

The life in this position was thoroughly enjoyed by the boys. The dug-outs were well constructed and warm. Each had a small stove or fireplace, and it was not long before we made use of these luxuries, for cooking eggs and bacon. The small town of St. Julien was within a mile of us, and every night one boy from the section would take a trip to the town, there to purchase such delicacies as eggs, jam, canned peaches and pears, cheese, and champagne. Then at night, if things were quiet, we would have a meal "fit for the gods," and we developed some excellent cooks among the boys in the section.

One evening my friend, Sergeant MacDuffie, chief of this section, discovered a Victrola at the battalion aid station, in the town. He spoke to the medical officer in charge and succeeded in borrowing the Victrola with some records for the evening. Never in my life has any music sounded so wonderful to me. The records were very old and some of them badly worn, but

nevertheless they sounded to us like the very latest efforts of Al Jolson. We played the Victrola till nearly three in the morning. It was impossible to hear a sound outside of the dug-out, and it was not until the following day that the other sections learned of our musical orgy. Each section desired to borrow the Victrola, and we finally turned it over to the 3d Section with the understanding that they should carry it back to the medical officer. They agreed, and we parted reluctantly with the instrument. That afternoon, the captain, accompanied by an English officer, was returning from the O.P. (observation post) where he had been registering the battery, and paused a short distance in the rear of the 3d Section dug-out. The door was open, and imagine his surprise when he heard the strains of "He's My Yankee Doodle Dandy" wafted to his ears. The two officers drew near and peered in, and there they saw Arnold Eydenberg, one of the most amusing boys in the section, standing upon a table, giving a very creditable imitation of George Cohan in his most approved Broadway



style. It was worth "beaucoup francs" to see the captain's face. No doubt he had been telling the English officer how hard his men were working, digging and "improving each shining hour." At any rate, he hustled the Englishman down to his own dug-out and sent up word to return the "music box" at once.



## CHAPTER VIII

### AT THE FIRST CORPS SCHOOL — GONDRECOURT

ON the third day of May, I received my orders from the captain to be ready to leave that night for the First Army Corps School at Gondrecourt. This was a Non-Commissioned Officers' School, a stepping-stone to Samur, the Field Artillery Officers' School in France. I left the battery in the evening, spending that night at the horse-line, and the next morning we were taken in trucks to our final destination, Gondrecourt. It was a beautiful ride and we thoroughly enjoyed it. We arrived in the afternoon, and at once were marched away for a bath and a change of clothes. One of the assistant instructors was in charge, and halting us on the outskirts of Gondrecourt, he apologized for asking a rather personal question. He desired those men who had cooties to raise their hands. There were between forty and fifty of us in the detachment, and all but about five of these raised their hands as

one man. Those who remained, claiming to be "pure," were denounced in such strong terms as prevaricators and "camouflageurs," that they evidently decided to waive personal pride and reluctantly raised their hands, making the vote unanimous. We were then marched back to the school, and told that for that night we must sleep in a separate barrack until our clothes could be "de-cootiefied," and a hot bath administered to each and every one of us. We spent a very comfortable night upon the floor of an old and unused Adrian barracks, the certainty of an unbroken night's sleep forming a pleasant contrast to the uncertainty of the nights at the front, where two hours of uninterrupted slumber were the height of one's ambition. Looking forward to a real hot bath on the morrow, we fell asleep to dream a beautiful dream in which soapsuds and shower baths played the leading rôles.

Early the following morning we were gathered together and transported in trucks to the medical station where our clothes were put through the cleanser and steamed out of all

fit or fashion, then returned to us in an unrecognizable mass of wool and cotton, damp and clammy, but free from cooties. We enjoyed, to the limit, our first hot shower bath in France. It was Sunday, and we were allowed to visit the town of Gondrecourt, which proved to be picturesque and attractive. A small river runs through the center of the town in which most of the local washing was done. It was an interesting sight to see the French girls, in their white caps and wooden "sabots," hastening to the river with the family laundry.

The following day our work at the school commenced. We had regular schedules of work with very little time for play. We were up in the morning at seven o'clock, mess from seven to seven-thirty, and at eight o'clock a very thorough personal inspection by our commanding officer, Captain Hudnut, a West-Pointer, and one of the finest officers it was my privilege to serve under. After inspection, we went through physical exercises for thirty minutes. Our lectures lasted from nine o'clock till noon, and with an hour out for lunch, con-

tinued until 4 P.M. We were given instructions in gunnery, telephones, battery instruments, matériel, horses, and gas defense. It was a most complete course, and those who really worked gathered much valuable information. The one thing which appealed to all of the men was the fact that one was not only able to keep clean and shaved, but one was required to: a pleasant contrast to life at the front.

We had been there for perhaps two or three weeks when we began to get restless for the "old outfit" and the front. I wondered what the boys in the battery were doing and wanted to be back with them. I remember one night at about ten o'clock, I was standing outside the barracks looking at the moon which had just risen. Suddenly I heard the distant boom of guns faintly borne to my ears on the still night air. I knew my battery was up there, and I was homesick. I crept into the barracks, and awoke one of the boys from the 101st Regiment. Together we stood there listening to the distant guns, each of us wondering what part his battery was playing in the barrage.

## CHAPTER IX

### BACK TO THE FRONT

WHEN, at the end of the month, our course completed, we were to leave for our organizations, it was with a sense of getting back home that we jumped aboard the train which carried us to Toul, where we had a good lunch in one of the cafés, boarded some trucks, and by three o'clock we arrived at our regimental headquarters. That night I spent at our horse-line located in the town of Andilly. It was "great" to be back with the boys again, and I was anxious to go up to the front that night. I was disappointed, however, and it was not until the following evening that I stepped aboard the park wagon bound for our battery position, which I learned was on the outskirts of the town of Bernecourt. It was rapidly growing dark as we rattled along the road. I was given to understand that there was much activity in this sector, and that the road we traveled was a favorite for Boche shelling. It

seemed ages since I had heard the warning whistle of a shell, and when the first one came over, bursting in a field to our right, it seemed almost like a "welcome home" from Fritz.

The boys were eager for reading-matter, a supply of which I had brought with me, and we established quite a circulating library during the next few days. We had moved during my absence and the new position, although a fairly good one, was decidedly a change for the worse. The dug-outs were small, and stagnant water to the depth of several inches filled the communication trenches. It was evident that there was much work to be done in and about the position.

It was necessary to divide the firing battery, and keep at the position only those who were absolutely necessary. The extra men lived in the town of Bernecourt, where our kitchen was located in an old barn. The Boches were very regular in their methods, and shelled the town every night. During the day there was scarcely any firing, but at dusk, when the water-wagons



and ration-carts came up, the Boches would open up with H.E. and gas.

The dug-out in which seven of us slept was by no means gas-proof, and one night we had this fact very forcibly brought home to us. It must have been about three o'clock in the morning when we were all awakened by Corporal Ralph Lindsey who gave the gas alarm. We slipped on our masks which were always with us, as it was easy to tell that the dug-out was filled with the fumes. We had all been asleep, and had it not been for Corporal Lindsey who, happening to wake up, discovered the gas and warned us, some of the men might easily have been overcome.

There were persistent rumors of an enemy tank attack, and an anti-tank position was constructed for the fourth piece in case the attack materialized. Our observers reported many train-loads of enemy troops coming in daily and we were fully prepared for an offensive movement on the part of the Boches. During the early part of June, it was a common occurrence for us to see aeroplanes return-



ing from bombing expeditions against Metz which was about thirty miles away. Eddie Rickenbacker, the famous American Ace, was flying behind us, and the boys at the horse-line saw him perform frequently.

It was about this time that the "three-day fever" hit us. Men in the gun crews were forced to return to the horse-line, and some of them were evacuated to the hospital. It was an extraordinary disease and swept through all the armies, Allied and German. A man who contracted this disease was incapacitated for three days, and upon the fourth, in nine cases out of ten, was completely recovered. There were no after effects, save for making one feel uncomfortable for a short time and the fever did no material damage. There was no explanation given for it by the doctors, and as far as I know, it was simply one of the many strange diseases prevalent at the front.

Because of the marked increase in enemy activity, it was decided to give the Boches something to think about. So a projector gas attack was staged for the night of Tuesday,

June 18. Now to carry out the plans successfully the wind had to be blowing from our lines to the Boche. Perhaps my readers will understand the situation better if they realize that gas released from a projector depends upon a favorable wind to carry it across to the enemy lines, thereby differing from gas fired in shells. The greatest care must be exercised so that none of our own infantry should be endangered by a change of wind. In conjunction with the projector attack all the batteries in the sector were to fire heavy gas concentrations upon the enemy artillery. Now it happened that the Boches had planned a "coup de main" (or raid) early the following morning. Our gas caught them completely by surprise just before their attack, and was most effective against them. They captured the town of Xivray which was a short distance to our left, but were driven out in a counter-attack by our infantry. Our observers brought us the welcome news that during the next forty-eight hours ambulances were busy behind the German lines carrying back the gas casualties.

Rumors came to us from time to time of a move from our present sector. We had an idea that we were to go back for a rest, as we had been at the front some four months without relief. We pictured to ourselves a pleasant rest camp with ample opportunity for bathing and sleeping. It was a pleasing vision, which, needless to say, was never realized. The time had come when something told me it was necessary to take a bath. So, one morning, Corporal Lindsey and I decided to walk to the neighboring town of Ansauville where there were hot showers and the possibility of a change of clothes. It was a hike of some four or five kilometers and we started early, eager to be among the first under the showers. The day was warm, and we arrived decidedly hot and uncomfortable.

We sought the "Salle de Bain" and found it was closed for the day and no persuasion on our part could prevail upon those in charge to open it for us. If any of my readers have ever planned a pleasant evening, a delicious dinner followed by the theater, and perhaps a bit of

dancing after that; in short, an oasis in the desert of a hard month's work, an event which has been carefully planned even to the minutest detail, and looked forward to for weeks, then, when the long-awaited evening has arrived, to find, without warning, that all the hotels are closed, no theaters in operation, and all musicians on strike; if my readers can picture to themselves such a catastrophe, then they are in a position to appreciate my feelings when I found I could not take a bath. Even the clean clothes were not forthcoming, and so, tired and disgusted, we set out for the town of Mandres where we heard there were baths in operation.

It was nearly noon when we arrived there, and we at once sought something to eat. There it was that we received one of the most striking examples of the good work done by the Salvation Army. We found their canteen located in the cellar of what had formerly been a house, but what was now nothing more than a pile of débris. Shelled beyond all resemblance to a building, it presented the appearance of

a large pile of stones and rocks. We passed through a narrow door, and entered what remained of the cellar. There a sight, which I shall never forget, met my eyes. The room was filled with men in khaki, "doughboys" who had just been relieved from their "trick" in the line, others who were about to go up, machine gunners, artillerymen, men from the Medical Corps; in short, practically every branch of the service was represented there. At the other end of the room was a counter, made of old packing-boxes, and a field range, where the boys were being supplied with food and cigarettes. I was interested, and sitting down near the stove, listened to the conversation of the man who was cooking. He greeted each boy as he filed by, cheerful and smiling; he gave every one of them something to laugh about, and what was better, something to eat. Ham and eggs, sausages, bread, and crackers with a cup of hot coffee, comprised the menu. It was real coffee, not the muddy conglomeration of water and I don't know what which composed the army coffee. One lad inquired

the price before giving the order, evidently fearing that his supplies of centimes might not prove adequate to the demand. "What, are you broke?" was the reply, followed by a reluctant admission that fifty centimes (ten cents or thereabouts in U.S.) represented all his worldly goods. "It's free to you, then," was the response, and the boy passed on. Those who could pay, did; and those who could not, got what they wanted free of charge. Needless to say, there were none of those boys who would take advantage of this man's generosity. He played the game with them, and they in turn with him. Can one fail to understand why it is that the Salvation Army has made good in France, not alone where the sun shines and shells are conspicuous for their absence, but rather where the mud is deepest, and the "whizbangs" and gas are selections rendered hourly by the Boches? Every man who has entered a Salvation Army hut, and seen the unselfish devotion of the men and girls who, regardless of danger and discomfort, minister to the needs of the boys, will never forget them or



cease to hold a warm spot in their hearts for an organization which, though comparatively poor, is rich in good deeds done.

I will never forget a "top" sergeant who, after we had landed in New York, was taking the air on Fifth Avenue one afternoon. This particular sergeant was in an unfortunate condition; he had five cents in his pocket and a great appetite, an extremely poor combination. As we walked along we descried a Salvation Army girl standing on a corner, seeking contributions. Her luck had evidently been poor, as comparatively few coins adorned the small dipper. We went by, stopped, and my friend slipped his hand in his pocket, and tossing a five-cent piece into the box, remarked, "Well, boys, there goes my last nickel." It was a great tribute rendered to a great organization.

We had a delicious meal cooked by our Salvation Army friend, and left with reluctance. Our trip back to the battery position proved uneventful, and arriving early in the afternoon, we went to our dug-out and there found the most disgusted set of men in the world. Gloom

was in evidence on every face. We inquired the cause for this funereal gathering, thinking that perhaps these five men had been ordered to return to the States and were bemoaning their sad fate. Finally they told us, anger and indignation taking the place of sorrow and disgust. It seemed that the major had inspected the battery that morning. He went into the captain's dug-out and found him very properly asleep, as the battery had been up all night firing. He found the executive officer asleep in his dug-out, and most of the men in the same condition. All of which did not tend to make the major feel happy, as, no doubt, he himself would have preferred to be reposing quietly upon his own bunk, rather than inspecting his more fortunate subordinates. One of the officers, however, was up and about, and upon him descended the major's wrath. Our dug-out had been inspected and found wanting in the matter of "general police." It had not been swept out that morning and the captain was told of the matter upon awakening. He "passed the buck" to the first lieutenant, who, in turn,

passed it to the second lieutenant, who could not pass it to a private, but was awaiting my return to pass it to me. In the meantime the men were ordered out to fill in shell-holes as a penalty for their forgetfulness. The morning had been spent in this delightful pastime, which resembles the old game of building a stone wall and tearing it down again, with the exception that shell-holes were even more plentiful than stones in this particular locality. What would be the afternoon's work, that was the all-important question? I sought the captain, believing it better policy to seek him, rather than to have him seek me, and found him in a pleasant mood, having just completed his lunch. He warned me to be careful in the future of the appearance of the dug-out and I left, thinking the storm had blown over. But not so. The first lieutenant, evidently feeling that his dignity had been ruffled by the major, ordered us to spend the afternoon in stringing barbed wire. A pleasant task it proved. Those of us fortunate enough at the time to have fairly presentable clothes, found them in rib-

bons when evening came. Our hands were artistically decorated with scratches and cuts, and we were decidedly annoyed at the whole proceeding which was not only unpleasant, but decidedly unnecessary.

The next day was Sunday, and we hoped that we were to be spared any further disagreeable details, but "our friend" the lieutenant wanted all the empty shell-cases around the position taken to the town of Bernecourt, a kilometer distant. It was a delightful afternoon's work and the entire firing battery had a good laugh at our expense.

The rumors of a move still continued to reach us, and it was not long before we realized that we would leave in a short time. Our new brigadier-general inspected us, and the captain held various "non-com" meetings, outlining the plans for entraining. All the officers seemed to feel that we were leaving for a somewhat busier sector, and "open warfare" (where there are no trenches or dug-outs) was preached to us daily. On Thursday, June 27, the orders came that we had been relieved and that we

were to "pull out" at 10 P.M. that night. One of the park wagons was to take down the men's blanket rolls, the telephone and gas equipment, the field range and the machine gun and ammunition. It was necessary to wait until after dark before the park wagon could be brought into the town of Bernecourt, and nine o'clock had come and gone before we had even started loading. It was quite a proposition to get everything aboard, but it was finally accomplished and we were ready to leave for the horse-line.

## CHAPTER X

### BOUND FOR PARIS?

THE men's rolls had been packed in such a way that they covered the top of the load, rising to a point resembling a ridge-pole of a house. Some ten or fifteen of us straddled the top of this load, endeavoring to keep our equilibrium, as the rolls had a rather unfortunate habit of sliding from side to side, making our resting-place anything but secure. We must have been at least twelve or fifteen feet above the ground, as we rattled through the streets of Bernecourt, bound for our horse-line at Andilly. There is always a bit of good-natured rivalry between the drivers and cannoneers, and some of the latter had laid great emphasis on the fact that the road which we traversed would undoubtedly be shelled by the Boches, the drivers replying that it made no difference to them, as they were "hard." The idea of a shelling did not appeal to those of us who were riding on the top of the load, as any gait faster



than a walk promised ruin. We had barely reached the outskirts of the town and headed along the road to Ansauville when one "little joker" in our midst thought he would call the drivers' bluff and see whether or not they were so "hard" that they ignored shells altogether. He had secreted somewhere upon his person two hand grenades. Unfortunately for the rest of us who were riding on the load, he had failed to take us into his confidence. Consequently, when one of the hand grenades burst some twenty yards away in the field, it sounded to us like a Boche "77." The drivers let out a yell and the horses were urged into a gallop. Down the road we were carried at breakneck speed, the wagon lurching from side to side, and barely missing several trees in its headlong flight. I had visions of what would happen if one of the wheels of the park wagon should take it into its head to embrace some large tree in its wild passage down the road. It was with the greatest difficulty that we stuck on, grasping whatever presented itself as a stable support. The traffic grew more

congested, caissons, ration-carts, and water-wagons narrowly missed colliding with us, and it was only by the grace of God that we escaped a collision. No sooner had the horses run themselves into a slower pace than our friend behind us, who was enjoying the situation thoroughly, let drive with the other hand grenade and the performance was repeated, with the result that when the horses were finally brought to a halt, we were four miles nearer our destination, and the time made "over our course" would, I felt sure, compare favorably with that of some of our leading race-track favorites. No damage was done, however, and we reached the horse-line without further incident. The drivers had very little to say, and came in for much good-natured "ragging" at the hands of the cannoneers, who passed around the story among those who had not been present at the time.

That night and the following day were spent in preparation for our departure which was scheduled for the next evening at nine o'clock. The days were hot, and most of the

traveling was to be done at night. The entire regiment was ready and waiting, upon the following evening and we moved out of park at the designated time. Each battery had another machine gun issued to it, and both of our guns were mounted upon caissons during the march, as we had been warned that it was a common occurrence for Boche airmen to fly low and sweep a regiment with their machine guns. The men were ordered to hike with blouses and packs, which made our first night's march one of the hardest we went through. We covered twenty-four kilometers, arriving in the small town of Coussey at about four o'clock where we were to billet. Day was breaking before we were permitted to turn in, and I eagerly sought the hay-loft assigned to us.

The following morning "reveille" blew at nine o'clock and the all-important question was, "When do we eat?" As usual, I went out on a "patrol" to see if we could induce some "madame" to cook a breakfast for us. I was successful and prevailed upon a very obliging woman to provide for four. It was a delicious

meal. A large omelette, French fried potatoes, bread and butter, cheese, and milk composed our menu. It was well cooked and there was lots of it. An amusing incident occurred during breakfast when our "skipper," Captain Parker, entered the house, and stopped for a moment at the sight of four of his non-coms "getting away" with all that good food (he having just finished a rather uninteresting meal). As he turned to leave, we asked him to join us, but he declined, evidently believing that "to the victors belong the spoils."

The remainder of the day was spent in cleaning equipment and preparing for a long, hard hike. Two o'clock the following morning found us hitched in and ready to pull out of park. We understood that we were to entrain at a small town some fifteen kilometers distant, and we were in for a "large" day. The hike itself lived up to all our expectations. The drivers set a wicked pace, and the cannoneers found themselves walking slowly one minute and running the next.

There is always much competition between

the different batteries in the regiment as to which one can entrain in the shortest time. We had won the first competition some months before and were anxious to do the same again. From the moment when the "lead" team on the first piece put their hoofs on the loading ramp to the time when the last men had stepped aboard and we were ready to leave, forty minutes had elapsed. Again we had the quickest time in the regiment and everybody was well pleased.

The trip was a beautiful one, and the country, after the first few hours' travel, was undamaged by the hand of war. We passed through several large towns and were heartily cheered by the inhabitants. "Les soldats américains" always received a warm welcome from the French. As night drew near we wondered where we were going. Some of the boys had followed our course on a map, and stated that we were bound in the general direction of Paris. Oh, what a wonderful thought! We should be just in time to parade in Paris on July 4. No sooner had the rumor started than it was given

full credence. Everybody believed this, and the boys were drawing vivid mental pictures of the parade up the Champs Elysées lined for miles and miles by pretty French girls. As time went along, however, it seemed as if this rumor was a true one, for the following morning found us within ten miles of the city, and we were within easy sight of the suburbs before eight o'clock. We were all very much excited and glad at last that we were to see the historic city. We anticipated at least two or three days' "leave," and it was not long before every minute had been carefully planned. Nearer and nearer we came, until at last we were actually in the suburbs.

Then it happened. Without any warning whatever the train swung off to the right and we were no longer headed for Paris. What a moment before seemed almost a certainty now became one of those all too common rumors, and we realized that the 101st Regiment would not see Paris then, at any rate. The boys took the disappointment philosophically. "C'est la guerre," that was all, and they berated them-



selves soundly for even imagining such a thing as getting to Paris a possibility. We came to a sudden halt after two more hours of travel, orders were issued to detrain, and we were once more on our way, hiking over a dusty road in the heat of the day. We covered thirty kilometers before nightfall, and found that we were to billet in a small town some five miles outside of the city of Meaux. It was an exceedingly dirty place and the inhabitants were very poor, indeed. We managed, however, to find an old lady who cooked for us while we were there, and at least we had good food. July 4 was celebrated by morning passes to Meaux, and I enjoyed a delicious dinner at the hotel there. It was a novel sensation to sit down to a table and eat from real plates. That same evening at nine o'clock we hitched in, and hiked until 3.30 A.M. of the following day. We spent the day near a large château, the horses, guns, caissons, and limbers having been carefully parked under trees so that they would be invisible to enemy airplanes. We were on the way up to the front again, and orders awaited

us that the first platoon was to be ready to leave at 6.30 P.M. When the time came, these orders were countermanded and we were told to unhitch and spend the night where we were. It was welcome news, and we sought the nearest available resting-place. Three other boys and myself decided to pitch a "pup" tent. It took some time, but when everything was ready, we had a very comfortable place to sleep. Two of the boys had just fallen asleep and I had just slipped in between the blankets, looking forward to a good night's rest, when I heard a distant shout "C Battery turn out, harness and hitch." I prayed that some one would shoot me where I lay, so I would not have to get up. Confusion reigned supreme; men were sleeping anywhere within a radius of a half-mile, and it is no easy task to collect one hundred and eighty-five of them, in total darkness, especially if the majority refuse to hear their names called. Lanterns were procured and the horses harnessed with difficulty. I saw one "wheel driver" attempting to harness his pair, holding a lantern in one hand

and swearing in a most convincing manner. It was a fortunate thing that no Boche planes were "over" that night, or they would have had a field day. Considering the difficulties under which the men were working, the battery was ready to move in a comparatively short time. I found a seat on one of the escort wagons of the supply company attached to the battery, and fell asleep until the start was made. We had four mules who proved themselves anything but pleased at being routed out at night, and they promptly made all the trouble possible for the "mule skinner" (mule driver), who had no control over them whatever. Seats on any vehicle were as scarce as a stage box at the Winter Garden in the height of the season, and most of the men walked. Several wise ones camouflaged themselves under an old 'paulin in our wagon and spent a fairly comfortable night. We had no sooner made a start than our mules took the wrong road, partly through preference and partly through a desire to go in any direction other than the right one. It took a half-hour's hard

work to finally catch up with the battery, where we brought up the rear of the column. We passed several regiments of French troops, both infantry and artillery, who were going in the opposite direction, back for a well-deserved rest. They looked tired and worn, and hardly noticed us as they plodded wearily on their way. It was apparent that wherever we were going was far from a joke, judging from the appearance of these poilus.

## CHAPTER XI

### CHÂTEAU-THIERRY AND THE SECOND MARNE

THERE was no stopping for mess, and what little we had to eat was composed of canned willy and hard-tack. However, we halted at midday by the roadside, and the men dropped in their tracks to seize a few moments' sleep. It was evident that we were hurrying to the front, as the horses were not unhitched and everything was in readiness to move at a moment's notice. It was not until nightfall that we moved forward, and as all the roads were crowded by traffic, it was midnight before we succeeded in getting the guns of the first platoon into our reserve position, where we were to remain until the following night. It proved a pleasant spot, our only covering being the thick foliage of the trees, and our orders were not to fire except in an emergency. The following night we rejoined the second platoon, which had gone into position a mile or two in our rear, and started forward, bound this time for

that front of fronts, Château-Thierry. The night was overcast and not a star was visible as we rattled over the shell-torn road. We were accompanied for some distance by those brave boys in the infantry, marching along in silence with their rifles slung over their shoulders, bound for the scene of a battle which made the name of the 26th Division a watchword among the French. We were on the Paris-Château-Thierry road, and the Boches had been through there only a few weeks before. Now and then a motor-cycle dispatch rider dashed by us, on his way to the lines; occasionally an ambulance, at top speed, passed us, bearing its load of wounded. No guns roared forth as we advanced, but we knew that they were there, eager to welcome us, and we listened for the whine of the shells. Our route took us by a large farmhouse, situated near cross-roads, and known as the "Paris Farm." It was a dangerous place, as hardly an hour passed that the Boches did not shell it. As we drew near, all the men were ordered to mount, and we galloped along, turned off the main road, and



drew up in a field — lost. We were to relieve a battery of the 12th Field Artillery, and our guide, confused at the sameness of the terrain, had lost his way. There we stood, ignorant of our surroundings and wondering how much longer the German artillery would remain silent. After much riding about on the part of the caisson corporals, in an attempt to solve the problem, we started forward once more, retraced our path, and passed, for the second time that night, the ill-fated cross-roads. Again we halted in another field, and again we were lost. After a wait which, to us, seemed hours, a rider galloped up, having found our battery position. Once more we passed the cross-roads at a gallop, and found our position, some two hundred meters in front of the Paris Farm and to the left of the Paris-Château Thierry road. No sooner had we passed the place for the third time than the Boches started in their nocturnal serenade and scattered much of the road we had just traversed over the landscape. It was a lucky escape for us and we set to work getting the guns into

position, anxious for a chance to reply in kind. Our position was located in a wood. There were no gun-pits and only a few small dug-outs, useless as far as protection was concerned, which the boys called "graves," and very aptly named. It was absolutely necessary to keep our location hidden from the enemy, as, once discovered, there was little chance of escaping a concentration of fire which would prove anything but pleasant, situated as we were in the open.

We spent the following day in making what improvements we could around the position and carrying ammunition to the guns. The weather was pleasant, and for the first three days there was little firing save at night, when we were always busy "strafing" the roads and throwing over gas. The Boches were by no means idle, and our ration-cart and water-wagon were always late, often never arriving. The men lived in the open. We pitched "pup" tents under the trees and rested during the day, but at night hell broke loose along the entire front and we were always busy. An amus-

ing incident occurred, one day, when two members of our instrument detail were walking down the road near the Paris Farm. They had just reached the cross-roads when a shell burst behind them, throwing them flat by the force of its impact. They had not heard it coming and the first thing they really knew was that they were lying on the ground. They picked themselves up and took an inventory. One of them had three holes in his right trousers leg and the other had two in his left. They were made by shell fragments which evidently passed between them without so much as scratching either. They were lucky, that's all, and they gave those cross-roads a wide berth after that.

One afternoon I got permission from the captain to take one man with me and enter the town of Lucy le Bocage, which was some three or four kilometers in front of our position. Our object was to salvage machine guns and to look over the town. When we arrived at the outskirts, we saw no signs of life whatever. All was quiet, — a deadly sort of quiet,

— and we slipped into the nearest building, keeping out of sight of any observers. We went from building to building, impressed by the wanton destruction we saw on all sides. The Boches had been through there, and hand-to-hand fighting had taken place in the streets. Not a building was undamaged, and those that had escaped in part the shell-fire had been ransacked by the Boche infantry. Things which were obviously of no military value had been destroyed simply for the sake of breaking something. We entered what had been the school-house and saw a lesson in pronunciation on the board, for the small French children, and the date April, 1918, still remained. It took me back to that fatal day when the news of the enemy advance came to the inhabitants of this picturesque little town. I could easily imagine the consternation, the hurried gathering together of household necessities, and the hasty retreat; the old people who had lived there for years leaving all that was dear to them behind; and then I pictured their return, at some later date, to find their humble dwell-

ings but a mass of dirt and stones, and their once picturesque little town unrecognizable save for its location on a map. We spent nearly two hours there. Equipment was scattered everywhere in the streets. Rifles and German machine guns lay in the gutters, all partially destroyed. We made our way back through the public square and entered the little church. That, too, we found in ruins, windows broken, statues lay shattered upon the floor, and the altar had been struck by a shell. To me it was the most pitiful sight of all. This spot which for years, perhaps centuries, had been a thing of beauty to the inhabitants had been ruined beyond repair. Houses could be rebuilt, and streets remade, but this little church would never be the same. Walls may be rebuilt, but traditions and sentiments — never. We passed outside, and gazed upon the small cemetery which lay quiet and peaceful, a picturesque sight in the light of the setting sun. No sound broke the stillness of the place, and here and there a wooden cross, distinguishable with its tri-color, bore witness to the fact that brave

Frenchmen had given their lives in the defense of their very homes. It was a touching sight, and we hurried away with a very real conception of what this war has meant to the French, the sacrifice of the houses, their towns, and their men — young and old.

As we turned to leave, we met three “doughboys” filling canteens at a well. They seemed startled to see us, and were evidently in a hurry, as they wasted little time in conversation. We wondered at this seemingly uncalled-for haste, and learned, much to our surprise, that the Boche had 37 mm. guns trained on the town, and whenever they saw any sign of life in the streets, they opened up. Furthermore, they added that it was the usual custom to shell the place at least every half-hour and that we had better “slide along.” We did it, because when a “doughboy” says leave, you can be sure that there is the best reason in the world for so doing. We had barely made the turn in the road when we heard the first “whiz-bang” land in the town and saw the smoke rise slowly over the street. We called the meet-



ing to order, and passed a unanimous vote of thanks to our friends who had warned us. Hastening back to the battery, we arrived there just in time for mess.

That night we turned in hoping for an unbroken sleep and we got it — until two in the morning. I was rudely awakened by some one who told me that the captain wished to see me. I dressed — that is, put on my shoes and helmet — and reported. He told me that the intelligence officer expected an enemy attack at dawn and to get my machine gunners out and “stand to” till morning, in case the Boches broke through. I got the men up and told them the news which one of them greeted with the philosophical expression, “Same old bull. I wish they would come through for a change.” We had heard the same thing so many times before, that it had lost its novelty, but the prospect of a little excitement stimulated them, and the men took their posts.

I seated myself at the telephone switchboard in order to hear if any new orders came through, and was engaged in conversation with

the operator when I heard a man running up from the guns, crashing through the trees, evidently in a great hurry. He came near and I heard him shout into the medical man's dug-out, "The first piece has blown up." My heart stopped for a moment. Every artilleryman knows what to expect when one of his own guns blows up. I seized a flashlight and hurried out into the darkness. It was impossible to distinguish a thing. I rushed down toward the first piece, slipping and stumbling along the path. I met the captain hurrying in the opposite direction, followed by two men carrying a stretcher, and my worse fears were realized. I hastened on, arriving at the gun-pit just as a limp form was being placed upon a second stretcher. Lighting the way for the bearers, we made our way back through the woods to the dug-outs. There we found the man assigned to our battery from the Medical Corps, Ed Lange, busily at work doing all in his power for Corporal Spallas, the gunner of the first piece, who had been dangerously wounded in the leg.

The first piece had just begun firing when the accident occurred. On the second or third shot the gun blew up, injuring the three men who were serving the piece at the time. The chief of section, Corporal Ted Fowler, of Roslindale, had just turned, after loading the gun, when the breech-block was blown some twenty feet to the rear, slightly grazing his shoulder. It was a lucky escape from a serious injury. I will never forget the remark he made to one of the boys who endeavored to assist him; his wound was causing him intense pain at the time, but he waved him away, saying, "Leave me till the last; look out for the others." He was game to the core. Private Ralph Corey, of Boston, who was playing number one on the gun, never recovered consciousness, but died twenty minutes after he reached the hospital. I had slept with him in the same dug-out for weeks and knew him well. I never met a better soldier. Always cheerful, he was continually thinking of others first, and eager to do more than his share of the work. He was an inspiration to those who served with him and

was without a doubt one of the most popular men in the battery. His death threw a shadow over us for days, and nobody who served in C Battery will ever forget Ralph Corey, and we will all of us be better men for having known him.

The men's wounds were dressed as well as possible, and they were evacuated to the hospital within twenty minutes. We hoped that they would save Corporal Spallas, but we learned that his wounds, too, proved fatal, and he also made the supreme sacrifice. In civil life Nicholas Spallas kept a little fruit-stand in Boston. He was one of the most efficient gunner corporals in the battery. His gun was always spotless, and I remember once surprising him while sitting on the gunner's seat and stroking the breech, as a man would pet a favorite dog. He lived for his gun and it seemed the irony of fate that it should be his own gun which caused his death. Often at night while on guard, I would talk with him, and I learned that he had no family, no relations in the world but a girl was waiting at home for him when

he should come back. He never complained after he was hit, never uttered a word, just lay there in silence, and Captain Parker's last words to him were, as they lifted him into the ambulance, "Well played, Corporal, well played." He had lived like a soldier, fought like a soldier, and he died like a soldier.

These were the first casualties in the battery. For over five months at the front we had been "lucky," and as dawn broke and the sun rose out of the east, what had been, the night before, a battery of boys, became that morning a battery of men, all fighting mad and eager for revenge, and every number one man, as he pulled the lanyard sending a shell on its way, murmured a silent prayer that it would find its target.

Troubles never come singly in the army, and so we found it. All day long the Boches remained quiet; hardly a shot was fired along the entire front, but it was only the calm which precedes the storm. That night we made our first acquaintance with mustard gas, and we found through experience that the Boches

had a goodly supply of it. We had a firing schedule which had been planned for most of the night, and the gun crew of the second section was busy doing two guns' work, as our first piece had not, as yet, been replaced. The Boches had evidently spotted our position, and they opened up on us with a concentration of mustard gas. As a result Lieutenant Lovering Hill, our executive officer, and Sergeant Edmund O'Callaghan, chief of the second section, were both evacuated before morning, and the following day some fifteen or sixteen men were also sent to the hospital as a result of the gas. It was necessary to move the second piece because the fumes were still very noticeable near the gun-pit, and after considerable difficulty we succeeded in establishing the gun in another emplacement nearer our so-called dug-outs.

That afternoon we did considerable firing, and a disastrous afternoon it proved, for there were at least five Boche observation balloons up and two airplanes; but our orders were to fire and we did so, with the result that our



new location was "spotted." That evening, about mess-time, the Boches started "throwing them over." They were landing about a hundred yards in our rear and we paid no particular attention to them, although we could hear the shell fragments whistle over our heads from time to time and we gave little attention to anything else, until, after one report, louder than the rest, we heard the well-known whirr, and looking up saw a shelter half which had been stretched between two or three trees suddenly give a twitch, and a hole about the size of a silver dollar appeared in it. Now it happened that "Ollie" Parsons, one of the cleverest number one men that ever rode a gun, was sitting below this shelter half, and the hole had been made directly above his head. He never stopped eating, glanced up, and on the strength of his narrow escape asked the cooks for some more potatoes. A telephone message from the captain warned us that the shells were dropping nearer and to keep our "heads up" when we returned to the guns. Then the shelling ceased, as abruptly as it had begun,

and once more the woods were quiet. The birds resumed their twittering in the trees, and we fully believed that we should not be troubled again that night.

At about eight o'clock I happened to be standing outside of the hole which, by courtesy, we called a dug-out, talking to one of the boys who was sitting outside, when, without any warning whatever, a shell landed so close that I was reduced to a sitting posture and thrown bodily into the dug-out to the intense discomfort of my friend who came into close contact with my hob-nailed boots. He expostulated in no mild terms and I apologized profusely, urging him not to hold me responsible, but rather the man who had fired the shell. I had barely made my exit from the dug-out, when another shell landed closer, if anything, than the first, and again I slid gracefully through the door.

Then they came, one after another, with little or no interval between, and getting closer all the time. There were six of us sitting on the only spot we could sit — the floor — with our

heads just clearing the logs above us. We sat there and waited for the "party" to stop, but it did not, it grew more violent, and we realized that we were in for it. It was impossible to count the shells, for no man living could add fast enough to give an accurate tally. We could hear the report of the guns in the distance, the whine of the shells, and the explosion right outside. The ground shook with the series of concussions, and taking it all in all, we had an excellent imitation of the San Francisco earthquake. The dug-outs, as I have mentioned before, were anything but shell-proof; in fact, as one man remarked, "I doubt like hell if they'd stop a machine-gun bullet." They consisted of a hole dug in the ground, over which some small-sized logs were thrown. The only advantage derived from these coverings was a decided desire on the part of those seeking shelter within to become Christian Scientists, at least for the time being.

We noticed a peculiar odor, different from the usual smell of burnt powder and we knew it was gas. We pulled on our masks, and sat

there in silence waiting. I heard Captain Parker's voice outside, inquiring whether all the men had their masks on and if everything was all right. He continued to walk up and down, ignoring the shells and gas, thinking of but one thing, the safety of his men. Ever since our first day at the front our captain had watched over the battery as a father, and no man who saw the "skipper" that night, as he paced up and down in the open regardless of the danger to himself, will ever forget his cool exhibition of nerve. He was badly gassed as a result, but even then refused to be evacuated, and had to be carried away bodily before he would leave the boys. He was a splendid soldier, a great leader, and "all-man."

One enemy shell, more accurate than the others, hit a pile of ammunition, and two hundred and fifty rounds of H.E. went up in one huge sheet of flame. The Boches saw it and dropped five shells in practically the same place, and then Sergeant Ernest O'Callaghan, the "top" of the firing battery, did one of the "gamest" things I ever saw. He pulled off his



SERGEANT ERNEST O'CALLAGHAN  
*Chief of Fourth Section*





gas-mask, for it is next to impossible to speak clearly with the mask on, and rushed from dug-out to dug-out telling the men to stay where they were and quieting them generally. Not content with this, he dashed over to the burning ammunition and did what he could to extinguish the fire. As a result of the exposure the gas so affected his eyes that he was temporarily blinded, but after a month in the hospital recovered sufficiently to rejoin the battery in the closing days of the war.

It was apparent that to stay in this place much longer would have been fatal, as the gas was so thick you could almost "lean against it." The captain gave orders to withdraw to our second platoon which was in a position some two or three hundred meters distant. It was a case of each man for himself, and we all arrived at our meeting-point in the course of fifteen or twenty minutes. None of us realized at the time that we had been gassed, and we eagerly sought a spot where we could stretch out and sleep. The shelling had lasted from eight o'clock until after midnight and I sank

upon the ground some twenty feet from a "75" which was firing, and dropped asleep. The reports of the gun, under normal conditions, so close, sounded to me like a pleasant lullaby. It made little difference to us just then how much noise we heard, as long as the noise was made by outgoing shells, and noise at the front never did interfere with our sleep. Three of us had rolled up together in our blankets, side by side, Sergeant O'Callaghan, Corporal Sweeney, and myself. For nearly five months we had slept together at the front. The next morning I was awakened by Sergeant O'Callaghan who complained of trouble with his eyes. He was unable to open them, and I knew that it was the delayed effects of the mustard gas. He was evacuated at once, and before noon there were thirty-two casualties in the battery, including the captain. The worst cases were sent at once to the hospital, and those of us who were not so severely burned received treatment at the aid station. My two "bunkies" left me for the hospital, and it was almost the first time we had been separated since our arrival in France.

The battery was very short-handed, and even with some replacements from the drivers who were sent up from the horse-line, every man in the firing battery was doing four men's work. That day we spent in rest, and we made the most of it. Men who had never been in a gun squad before had to be instructed in their duties. From being the luckiest battery in the regiment we had become the "hoodoo," all in three days.

We spent the night of July 16 in "pup" tents, little thinking that the following morning at 5 A.M. would go down into history as one of the famous days. It must have been nearly midnight when our battery commander, Lieutenant Knauth (who was in charge of the battery in Captain Parker's absence), received orders to be prepared to fire an offensive barrage at 5 A.M. It was the beginning of the advance which never stopped until November 11, and it was a glorious beginning. I was told that the only difficulty was in keeping our infantry from going ahead too fast, and so, indeed, it seemed, for that morning we re-

ceived orders to advance some four or five kilometers to the town of Lucy. All day long there was intensive aerial activity, planes, both ours and the Boche, were up long before dawn, and many an interesting air fight we saw; but the boys were much too busy preparing for our move to watch many of these engagements.

One thing, however, we did watch, and that with great pleasure. Hundreds of German prisoners were brought in during the day. Huge truck-loads of them, all congratulating themselves that they had escaped so easily. I remember two who passed our position, one a man of at least forty-five, and the other a boy who could not have been a day over fifteen. Their appearance told us that they had enough of it, and were glad to be taken away, even as prisoners.

Our limbers came up at seven o'clock, and we limbered up, packed all equipment, and started forward.

We found our new battery position anything but a good one; in an open field with but a narrow line of trees for cover, it afforded abso-

lutely no protection from shell-fire, or enemy observers. We were to be ready to fire at 8.15 P.M. which meant quick work in getting the guns into position. I was sent over to battalion headquarters to report the battery "ready" to the major, and for the second time entered the town of Lucy. On the way I met Corporal Dan O'Leary, of our battery, who was a "runner" and bound for our position with a message from the major. He pointed out my route to me, and we separated. I found the major ensconced in the cellar of an old shell-torn house, delivered my message, and started back. Again I met Corporal O'Leary, and he greeted me with the news that they had "got him," and I saw his arm covered with bandages. A shell fragment hit him just before he reached the battery. It did n't seem to worry him much and he walked along as if nothing had happened. He was evacuated that same night, and, so far as I know, came out of it in good shape.

We spent that night in spasmodic firing, and the Boches showed us early in the morning

that they had a very good idea where we were. Corporal Bright, our acting instrument sergeant, and I rolled up together about 2 A.M. and were sleeping peacefully in an open field when we were rudely awakened by shells landing some fifty yards away. It was too early to get up, and we did not enjoy lying awake and wasting time which might be spent in sleep. Corporal Bright then made a wise suggestion, which was to pull the blankets over our heads and thus protected we could sleep in peace. We did it, and ostrich-like we enjoyed another hour of rest.

That morning, save for enemy planes, we were undisturbed, and the gun crews made up for some much-needed sleep. We had three men on a gun, and under normal conditions we should have had at least six. Privates were acting as sergeants, and men were filling in wherever they were needed.

Our field range was placed under two large trees and mess was cooked in the open. Some of the men were sitting around the fire, eating, when an enemy observation balloon suddenly





W. E. BRIGHT, JR.  
*Instrument Sergeant*



shot up, spotted our kitchen, and in less time than it takes to write it two shells dropped right in the midst of the men sitting around the fire. Ten of the boys were wounded, four of them severely, and the medical man attached to the battery, Private Primrose, gave a wonderful exhibition of courage as he gave these men first-aid treatment under continuous shell-fire. One lad, "Red" Gould by name, of East Boston, had a shell fragment pass completely through his ankle. He looked around, saw that some of the others were harder hit than he was, got up and walked across the field, borrowed a cigarette from another boy, remarking as he lighted it, "Well, they touched me up a bit," and sat down by the road to await the ambulance. When it arrived, he got in and that was the first intimation he gave that he had been wounded. He had lots of nerve, and was always cheerful, one of the most popular boys in the battery. Four of the boys who were the most seriously wounded, Privates Chilcott, Gould, Smelledge, and Fine, were placed in the ambulance and evacuated. One

of them, Charlie Smelledge, of Dorchester, never recovered. He was a very conscientious boy, a splendid man on the guns, thorough in his work, and loved by all. I served in the same section with him for six months and no finer boy ever lived.

The rest of the day was spent in digging shelters for the men, and everybody worked hard to get them completed, as it was impossible to tell how soon we might need them.

That night, shortly after dark two large truck-loads of ammunition arrived at the position, and each shell had to be carried by hand, from the road where the trucks were unloaded, to the guns, a distance of some seventy-five meters. Our executive officer, Lieutenant Paul Smart, the old Harvard hockey player, spent the entire night carrying ammunition with the men, so that members of the gun crews could make up some of their much-needed sleep. With a shell over each shoulder he tramped back and forth, working himself, so that the men might rest.

At about 2 A.M. I asked the battery com-

mander if there was anything more to be done, and he replied, "No, you'd better turn in. I suppose you know you're going back to the States as an instructor." It seemed to me a particularly inopportune moment for joking, and I told him so. Especially as two Austrian "88's" landed some twenty yards away, just after he made this statement. We carried on the remainder of the conversation from a prone position, and he told me that I was to leave the following day. I turned in, just as a Boche plane flew over us, dropping bombs on a small town to our rear, and enjoyed a good night's sleep in a narrow ditch.

The next day at noon I said good-bye to the boys; I shook hands with every boy in the battery and got the addresses of their different families. The last message they gave me was characteristic of the battery and of the division, "Tell them at home that when you last saw us we were going forward like hell." That night the six "non-coms" from the regiment who were going back to the States as instructors spent the night at the horse-line. We

slept soundly, and they told me the next day that we had missed an air raid which was a "corker." We were loaded in trucks, hustled down to La Ferté, where we took the train for Paris, spending one day there. The last word we heard from the boys at the front was that the Boches were retreating so fast that even our motorized machine-gun battalions could not keep up with them. From Paris we went to Brest, and there boarded the *America*, which sailed the following day. Most of the boys — there were some two hundred of us — spent the greater part of the voyage in their bunks, and I slept for almost eight days continuously.

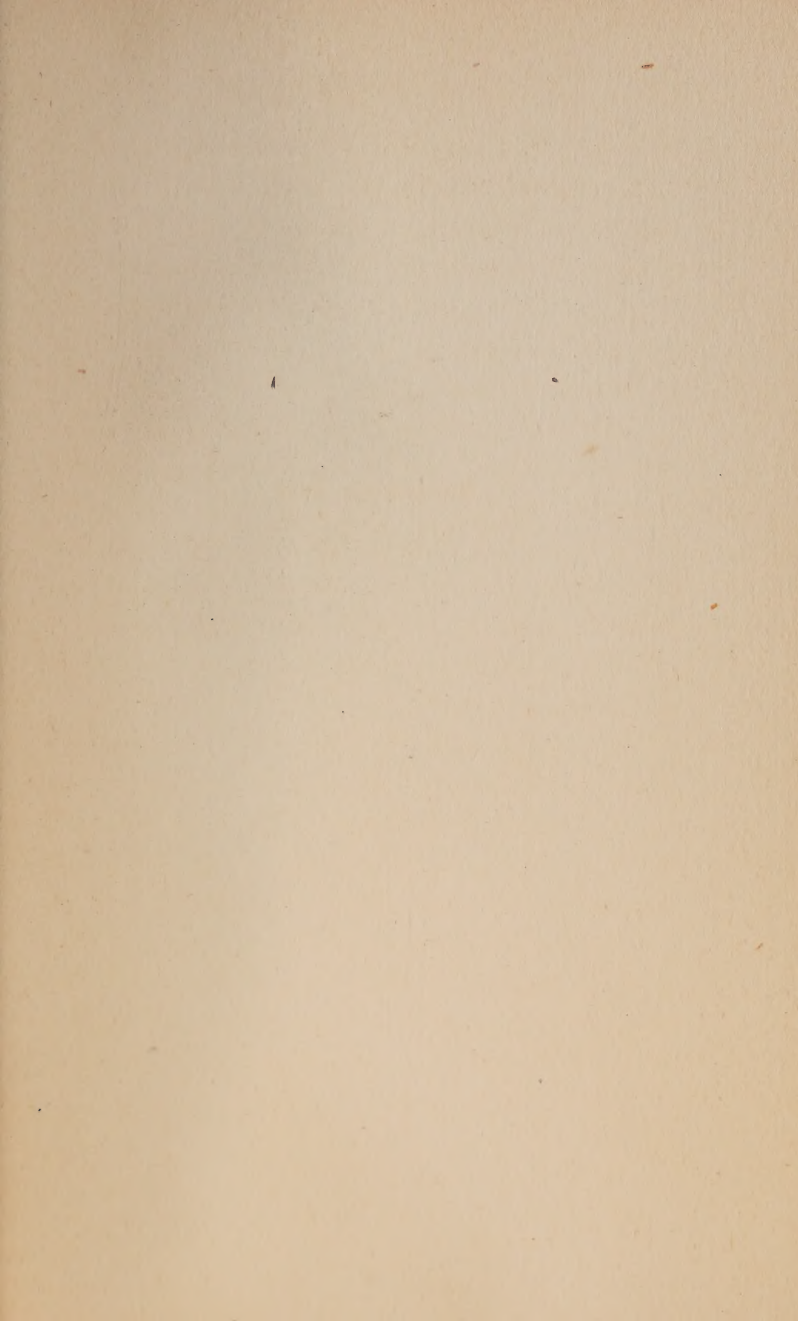
Our voyage was without incident, and as we slowly made our way up the harbor, and I saw the Statue of Liberty in the distance, and the shore of God's Country, I felt that the real, lasting, and undying credit for final victory belonged, and would belong through the ages, not to those who went over and came back, but to those brave boys, heroes every one of them, who sailed for France and now



lie buried as they fell, with their faces to the enemy, each final resting-place marked, not by monument of marble or headstone of granite, but by a simple wooden cross, the emblem of their supreme sacrifice.

THE END

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